INTERSECTION OF CHIRIST AND CULTURE: A MODEL FOR SPIRITUAL FORMATION WHILE EXAMINING BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

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ABSTRACT

INTERSECTION OF CHRIST AND CULTURE: A MODEL FOR SPIRITUAL FORMATION WHILE EXAMINING BILBICAL PRINCIPLES AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

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The context of this project is Bethel United Holy Church, Trenton, New Jersey. The problem within this context is the exodus of young people due to the conflict of Christ and culture. The hypothesis is if participants are engaged in an exploration of biblical principles over a six-week period, then spiritual formation is achieved. The methodology utilizes qualitative analysis, journaling, group discussions, and pre and post-evaluations. The outcome is a biblically grounded worldview that examines cultural influences on daily life among youths.

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First, I want to give honor to God my creator, Jesus my Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit my Sustainer for the assurance of Life everlasting.
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to God and the Church in my early years. To my parents, Minister Fred King and Mrs. Glyndora King, for giving me the foundation for spiritual formation.

To My Children, Jasmine Denise and Dayzee Elaine, you are the inspiration for teaching young Christians the importance of a personal relationship with the Savior of the world, Jesus, who is Christ.

To my Sisters of Power (SOP) Ladies, your encouragement and prayer are invaluable..

ABBREVIATIONS

UHC	United Holy Church of America Inc.
NIV	New International Version
RSV	Revised Standard Version
YPHA	Young Peoples Holy Association
KJV	King James Version
WGU	Western Governor's University

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, 'Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?' Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."

— Marianne Williamson, A Return to Love: Reflections on the Principles of "A Course in Miracles

INTRODUCTION

"The Intersection of Christ and Culture: A Model for Spiritual Formation that Examines Biblical Principles and Cultural Influences" will be designed to provide a comprehensive and intensive six-week study that will provide participants with biblical principles and contrasted cultural norms. This project will give the participants a platform to analyze how cultural influences oftentimes contradict biblical principles. The influences of culture on Christian formation and growth must be explored and examined through both psychological and sociological lenses. With this in mind, the church must be more deliberate in its approach to ensuring a deeper foundation as it leads young Christians in their spiritual formation. This will be designed to allow participants to engage in collaborative activities and discussions that will allow various perspectives on the acknowledged concern for the exodus from the organized church.

This program will accept the uniqueness of the participants involved in the project; as a result, the project will give opportunities for all participants to use their gifts and talents as we venture through the activities provided. The participants will reflect on how the culture influences their thinking, choices, and habits. The design of the program includes, but is not limited to, Biblical analysis journaling activities, group discussions, and personal reflections.

The workshops will be conducted in the form of a seminar, and the student participants will be free to ask questions during the presentation at the discretion of the

seminarian. The personnel will include student participants and seminar leaders who will guide the student participants through the prescribed activities. In preparation for the development of the seminars, the context associate will have input on what principles would be acceptable in the chosen context. The context associates will evaluate and give feedback to the researcher and the participants. Before the first week of the project implementation, there will be a short orientation session with the context associate. The purpose of orientation is to provide instruction in launching the online journal. This time gives the associate an opportunity to ask questions about the process and give their feedback on the proposed project. Participants will include but not be limited to the context parishioners, which includes both men and women of multiple age groups. Lab activities will be conducted along with lead group discussions, and a Context Associate will be the liaison between the pastor, participants and researcher.

The various chapters of this document will include Ministry Focus, Biblical, Historical, Theological and Interdisciplinary foundational chapters that will explore the connections found in the model for spiritual formation. Chapter one is the ministry focus that includes my spiritual journey. My upbringing and the principles taught to me by my parents. My observation of cultural influence on young people, that leads to behaviors that are contrary to biblical principles is the motivation for the creation of this model. The lack of discerning the relevance and necessity for a person relationship with God is also a response to the cultural influences on the church. Chapter two is the biblical foundation which will examine the chosen passage for this model. Deuteronomy chapter six verses one thru fourteen. This chapter examines Moses' directives to the young Israelites prior

to the entrance of the promised land. This chapter also includes exegesis of the passage and how it informs the creation of the project. Chapter three is the Historical foundation which explores the Sunday School movement. There is an extensive examination of its origin, spread to the new world and its intertwined connection and contribution to Christian education and secular education today. Chapter four is the theological foundation. This chapter examines Liberation theology it's origin and it's connecting power between religious and cultural events of the past and present. This chapter explores the voices, past and present, within the discipline of liberation theology. These voices lay a foundation for examining closely the cultural influences and societal norms of the day. While examining the cultural influence the connecting of the biblical methodologies of theological ideas gives weight to the thesis of the model. The final foundational chapter, Chapter five, examines the intertwining praxis and methods found in secular education. These methodologies and pedagogies can be used in developing Chrisitan educational models for spiritual formation. Chapter six provides the results of the project. The data is used to evaluate the model. All of these foundations will support the hypothesis of the project. If there is a systemic teaching and reinforcement of biblical principles, then young people will be able to assess cultural views and make better life decisions based on those principles. A change in mindset form a world view to a biblical world view is the intended outcome of the project.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Secular humanism and postmodern Christianity have eaten away at the foundational fabric of the Christian church. In the minds of some parents, parishioners, and subsequently, the youth find no relevance in Christianity and the church. I have witnessed the pull of our culture on our society as a whole and specifically shaping the values of our youth. Very often, these values do not include the biblical values that I embrace. The streets have claimed too many of our youth. I have a desire to share the peace of God with them. I want to model the transformation a personal relationship with Christ can produce. I want to offer a different response to hurt, injustice, selfishness, and greed; a response that does not include destruction, lawlessness, and death. I want to share a love that passes human understanding: the love of God through Jesus

Christ. I desire to obey God, fulfill His purpose, and glorify Him with my life. I am confident "that He who has begun a good work in (me) will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6 NIV).

I was influenced by my parents and my surroundings in church. The many times I attended conventions and convocations, gatherings of people of God where God was revered, worshipped, and praised, gave me a sense of understanding and knowing who God is and what he thinks of me as an individual. Today's youth do not seem to have that same foundation.Spiritual formation is a critical part of development for young people.

The exposure to systematic and deliberate examples led to the critical development of my spiritual formation. That deliberate focus began at home with bible study and prayer with my parents. In the local church, there was weekly bible study in the middle of the week with Sunday school and the Young Peoples Holy Association (YPHA). Finally, workshops, conferences, and conventions at the regional level afforded me the opportunity to meet other Christian youth. All of these examples gave me a compass that put Christ as my true north and led me to my passion for Christian education. During seminary study at Shaw University Divinity School, I endeavored to complete a dual degree in Master of Christian Education and Master of Divinity; however, health issues again hindered my plans. My spiritual autobiography also revealed another attribute my parents and church modeled for me: resilience and perseverance while depending on and trusting in God for every need and want in my life.

My ministerial motivation is rooted and grounded in those examples I experienced. I want to revisit the spiritual foundation that I received and personalize it to meet the needs and cultural influences that confront our youth today. Because of my physical interruptions, I recognize that I need more experience in the application of God's Word. In my quest for biblical knowledge, I must continue to study scripture as I attempt to share the love of God with others. I lack experience in actually conducting the programs that I envision. The spiritual gains I have experienced propelled me to move forward with a twofold objective: to learn more of God's

Word and to prepare methods to effectively reach the youth of today, preparing them to influence and disciple others in their generation. I desire to empower youthful Christians and instill moral values that will translate into transformed lives.

I asked the Creator to help me find and become a part of a context that will feed my soul and be the place where I can be a productive and positive part of the community. I sought an answer: a church that is a part of the denomination I grew up in. The context is a family-oriented church. As a part of the United Holy Church of America Inc., the leadership, met and decided to keep the parishioners in mind.

When analyzing the demographics, I observed that there are several families who have been part of the church congregation for generations. These families continue to serve in every capacity necessary for the smooth administration of the church's daily activities. I desire that my presence is a help and a contribution to fulfilling the mission of the church. This church is significant to me because it is where the foundation of my family's faith can be found. The United Holy Church has a diverse congregation of young men, women, and children. The congregation consists of middle-income parishioners, with many who have greater than a high school education, the median age group of parishioners is fifty-six years of age, with several young children and several seniors on both ends of the spectrum. Many parishioners are closeknit and family-oriented; they treat each visitor as family. The pastor and other parishioners make any individual attending church feel at home and comfortable as the Word is preached.

This body of Christ prides itself on teaching the Bible, its precepts, and principles, meeting each individual who attends at their level of understanding. Engaging in Bible

study and attending Bible church school on a weekly basis will encourage understanding of biblical principles and precepts.

The community surrounding the church is also part of the context. Thus, any project introduced to the church proper must include the surrounding community. Today's culture focuses on self-development, self-improvement, and self-gratification, and many feel there is no need for a savior. Thus, the greatest challenge for the church is to present the knowledge of God the Creator, Christ the Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit, the sustainer and comforter, as relevant and necessary in the lives of humanity. I want to help the community to recognize the importance of the truth of the Bible.

Because of the rapidity of communication, the proliferation of acquired knowledge, and the diversity of ideologies and philosophies, the church must be cognizant of what is being taught in its centers of learning, social media, and fireside chats. The church must be able to respond with a thorough and complete account of God's plan and purpose for His creation: humanity. Because I believe the practices and activities of the present youth departments do not mirror the ones I encountered, I want to be the agent needed to affect that change. The purpose and goals must be focused on the Word in order to impart and grow faith in our present-day youth. I believe that the focus of all programs must be to impact the lives of the young with the Word of God in all stages of growth and development. Biblical principles must be paramount in anyone's spiritual formation, regardless of age or maturity. Church programs and practices must always point to personal growth, ultimate transformation, salvation, a lifetime of service and love for all humankind, and reverence and admiration for the Most-High God.

With the onslaught of our educational systems delving into social justice, equal opportunities, and the rights of all, I feel the need to include the social issues that affect the lives of all. African American youth must be aware and believe that the God of all creation has included them in His promises, regardless of the proclamations that Christianity is a "white man's religion," and it is only established to hold Black people in slavery. I believe we must teach African American History and the history of life on the continent, both past and present. Church leadership must acknowledge the dispersion of the people throughout the diaspora. Christian educators must be able to link their history with God's creation and how He orchestrated life from Genesis to Revelation. Church leadership must make it known that, yes, God created the earth and all things in it. Young people must know that He is aware of all the events and activities that occur on the earth and things that happen to the earth. The church curriculum for the youth must include God's continued control over His creation. This is an area of study that requires much prayerful study and research. Youth must know and believe that God values all humanity, and He has redeemed it through the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Likewise, the church must be mindful that the youth are part of another community, the home. Family dynamics have a significant effect on the development of the child and the rate of maturity that is portrayed by the child. The church should make every attempt to include the entire family in this spiritual growth. All practices for the youth should extend to the family so that all involved can reap the benefit of familial fellowship. There should be a church-home connection and application in all areas of child and family life. Youth activities should be constructed so that the family will play a part in helping the child apply the principles of the text. With this in mind, the church

must be willing to pursue means to draw the family into the life of the church and include the adult members of the family who are not part of the church fellowship. Any church youth program must be cognizant of the synergy produced when the home and the church are on one accord, working for the souls of our youth and preparing them to lead others to this treasured gift: salvation.

As a Christian educator, I see the importance of spiritual formation and context understanding, which includes but is not limited to the church and the surrounding community. This is important for a comprehensive and systematic introduction to Christ and Salvation. I will prayerfully engage family and community to participate in the youth department of the church. With the permission of the leader, I will seek to establish a church-family-community liaison. It is vital that the community feels that the church values the community beyond a quick good morning.

My vison of ministry is in the realm of Christian education, with emphasis on the youth. I believe the purpose of my ministry is to use God's gifts to me and the knowledge that I have acquired through my education to help the youth navigate their youthful years using the compass of the Holy Word of God. The practices and activities I employ will be dictated by the ages, maturity, and circumstances of the groups. Age-appropriate principles, content, context, and activities are crucial to the effectiveness of youth ministry. Given the needs of the youth and the elements I have shared above, my ministry model would include a rigorous study of the principles of the Bible. The attributes of God would be first and foremost at all levels. The love shown by the sacrifice of Jesus will permeate throughout the program. I will utilize technological resources to relate to twenty-first-century youth. I will employ appropriate pedagogy to encourage decision-

making skills as students compare Christian principles with secular standards. My planned lessons will be influenced by the research available concerning the development of children through adults, and the different learning styles that individuals employ to gather information.

Secular schools are developing a skill identified as critical thinking. Many aspects of this concept may be adapted to the study of the Bible. Some Christian educators and leaders reject the practice because they feel that we are teaching students to be critical of the truth of the Bible. I believe that the motive of the facilitator will determine what the outcome will be. The practice gives the user a thinking routine for analyzing information. The Christian educator must thoroughly establish the truth of the Bible and the omniscience of God. In today's culture, the youth must be confident in the Word in order to resist the falsehoods of their environment. I will use biblical truths to help the youth develop a positive self-image. The youth must be willing to believe that they are "fearfully and wonderfully made." All activities will include the elements of sharing and transferring.

Students should learn early that the Good News should be shared. Proper methods of sharing can be learned through role play with one's peers, family members, and during youth activities. It is important that the knowledge and understanding of biblical truths should go beyond the Bible story and be incorporated into the student's daily lives. I will be intentional about this element. The purpose of learning about the will of God is to lead to a changed life.

The structure of my project will influence spiritual growth in myself and the participants because I will encourage them to seek God for a path to a greater knowledge

of Him. I will be encouraged to continue when God has allowed me to see the fruits of my labor. I will be encouraged to study more and seek Him more when there is a lack of success at any given moment. When I trust in God for the preparation and implementation of any work that He assigns to my hand, it will flourish and affect those around me. As the youth grow up, they will be equipped to become leaders and expand the offerings of the youth department. When replicated with appropriate modifications, those who come behind me or venture out to other places can experience the joy that I have for doing the work of the Lord.

I look forward to experiencing the joy of working with experienced Christian educators in my context church as I collaborate in programs for the youth. The youth population is small, but the leadership and department staff seem willing to allow me to get involved with another component to give me an opportunity as well as to enable the youth to experience something new. My life experiences are useful in preparing lessons on biblical information for a wide range of students, adults, and youth. Nursing skills and education give me a unique perspective on human development. Understanding human development provides insight into how young people learn and assimilate information. Also, this unique view reveals the appropriate subject matter for the appropriate age groups.

My experience in teaching Bible study and Sunday school provides me with skills to prepare lessons for a wide range of participants in the program. The educational study in Christian education also leads me to be able to create a curriculum for a variety of participants. The skills of listening carefully to young people give me the ability to answer questions and give credence to their understanding of subject matters. Using this

skill, I will be able to effectively create and tailor programs and lessons for multiple age groups. Listening carefully to their responses when asked questions gives credence to their understanding of the subject matter. All these skills will be used to better tailor and effectively create lessons and activities for students. This approach will give students information on their level. Having taught Sunday School to adults, my skills in presentation have been challenged. In many cases, the learners accepted my approach. The models' approach will be used to provide more in-depth knowledge of biblical principles. Understanding Biblical principles on the surface leaves a gap in understanding God, the Creator, as sovereign. However, a more concise and concerted effort in teaching gives the learner a more rounded education. The skill of listening as a youth contemplate the subject matter gives the young person a sense of recognition, being understood and heard. A sense of self-worth and positive self-esteem is also the goal of: "The Intersection of Christ and Culture: A Model for Spiritual Formation While Examining Biblical Principles and Cultural Influences" involves systematic teaching and reinforcement of biblical principles that enable the youth to navigate and assess cultural views and make life decisions based on biblical principles. It includes resources that provide ideas on how to engage families in integrating biblical principles and practical day-to-day operations of church activities. It is hoped that young people will be engaged to become leaders as well as give them the opportunity to participate in service. As suggested in *Making Neighborhoods Whole*, Perkins argues, "The goal is to win young

people to Christ as early as kindergarten and let the families know that they then provide them with spiritual and intellectual nurturing all the way through college."[1]

I am a firm believer that young Christians should strategically be a part of the total church body. There should be a scheduled time for them to take part in the main service. They should feel that they are an integral part of the church, not just an appendage that will be called on just for children's programs. Leadership begins with the observance of a good example. This can be best observed when leaders are at work in their various roles, and the youth can observe the duties performed and ultimately can step into that role when the time is right. Using spiritual formation to impact and inform the youth through their life's journey is the main focus of the model. If there is a systematic teaching and reinforcement of biblical principles, then young people will be able to assess cultural views and make better life decisions based on those principles. The curriculum will include intense bible studies that relate to the.

culture in which the youth are bombarded. The application of biblical principles coincides with historical and present-day situations in the participants' daily lives and introduction to leadership skills to cultivate self-awareness and self-confidence. The emphasis on Godly principles and reverence for God will come from a more in-depth understanding of who God is and what God's nature is in relationship to the participants. As the understanding grows in the participant, the relationship to God as a personal savior and Lord will become evident and perceptible by the change in the life of the participant. The

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[1] W.G. Perkins, Making Neigborhoods Whole: A Handbook for Christian Community Development (Downers Grove, Il. InterVarsity Press 2013),88

hope for the model is to make disciples and lead young people to Christ in the form of a personal relationship.

My desire to teach spiritual formation will also inform and grow my spiritual formation. Spiritual formation is a living and breathing entity within the life of a believer. Like knowledge, one should continue to grow and seek knowledge throughout one's lifetime. The implementation of the project will be a brick in the foundation and formation of my relationship with Christ. As the participants grow, so will I as a student of the Bible and a follower of Christ. The following are foundational beliefs of any youth ministry I. Know Yourself--How does God see you?

II. Know God--What are His attributes?

III. Who is Jesus--What is His relation to who God is?

IV. Know the Enemy--What are his tactics?

V. Making life decisions based on Biblical Principles.

VI. Avoiding Pitfalls in our culture

The education of our youth should include techniques of listening, meditation and an in-depth study of the affirmation that is foundational to the churches mission of faith. Listening techniques must ge taught in this microwave generation of instant gratification has diminished the ability to wait on the lord's answers to pray and thus many are disillusioned to the necessity of pray. Understanding that pray is an integral part of our relationship with God must also be emphasized.

Meditation on the word of God is another lacking skill prevalent in today's youth ministries. Many Christians reject the idea of meditation because the easter religions have perfected the technique of sitting in a quiet and calming space. This too is a roadblock for

true contemplation and hearing the voice of God through His word. And being cognizant of His presence. Finally, an in-depth study of the creed, or affirmation of the church congregation should be included in ministry at all levels, “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17 KLV)

The area of concern is that today’s youth have a cursory understanding of biblical principles. As a result, the youth fail to recognize the relevance of the Godly principles of the Bible. Today’s youth make life decisions based on cultural influences rather than biblical principles. This leads to decisions that are detrimental to their lives—causing a domino effect of hopelessness, helplessness, self-destruction, and apathy towards other human beings within the community. This gives rise to lawlessness, destruction of property, and possibly death of the youth.

To combat the self-destructive nature of the decision-making by the youth, an intervention by the church with the direction of God’s Word must be deployed. Teaching biblical principles and precepts will give the participants the tools to assess, analyze, and assimilate the values that will lead to more positive decision-making and a better quality of life. If the intervention and introduction of biblical principles are successful, then the participants will demonstrate a change in mindset, activities, and project leadership skills within the community around the church and throughout the world.

The perspective curriculum for the program, the “Intersection of Christ and Culture”, would include intense Bible study that will help students in the target group recognize the relevance of Godly principles in their culture, which will provide a biblical foundation for their decision-making. The work leading up to the completed curriculum will be ongoing for the next year and a half. It will culminate with a six-to-eight-week

implementation, at which time the ministry program will be evaluated by the context leadership and all who work in youth ministry.

Implementation begins with the orientation of context mentors and facilitators. Each individual will be given a form to sign and return. This form will include the mission statement and the parameters of the ministry. The context leadership must also approve the program as well as the mentors and facilitators. The mentors, facilitators, and leadership will determine the need for future planning sessions. These planning sessions will include an in-depth understanding of the mission of the program to ensure that the mentors and facilitators are all on the same page and equipped with the same general knowledge of child development as well as the different learning styles of the youth participants. Plenary sessions will be scheduled for collaborative work sessions to disseminate the curriculum and determine the equipment and materials needed to carry out the lessons and activities. Additional sessions will be planned and scheduled for seminars with professional peers to reinforce knowledge of secular educational tools and techniques. Any modification of these tools and techniques will be done if needed to fit the needs of the curriculum. A work session will be planned and scheduled for review by the context leadership and program manager to ensure leadership's approval and to implement any changes. This is also a time for context leadership to voice any concerns about the program and to relay said concerns to the mentors, facilitators, and program manager.

The structure of the lessons and activities will take a holistic approach and stress application to real life. The choice of lessons and activities will be guided by the age and developmental level of the participants. Holistic spiritual development will be an integral

consideration in the planning of each lesson and activity. All areas of spiritual development and foundational principles are of equal importance and will be implemented as such. Each lesson will include bible knowledge, an understanding of the principle, and a relevant application to the participant's life. These three elements will assist participants in recognizing the relevance of biblical truth to daily living. The teaching styles will be carefully chosen to complement the learning styles of the participants. Varying lesson delivery will be part of the lesson planning and will accommodate students who have different learning styles. Every effort will be made to give participants an opportunity to express concerns and document their growth in spiritual development. Self-reflection and self-evaluation will be used to help participants monitor their thought processes and decision-making mechanisms. Because we are created to operate as a community, appropriate lessons will be designed as collaborative activities. This technique gives the participants practice developing an appreciation for other's perspectives, differences, and the right to learn and grow. The structure of the learning sessions will be designed to take into consideration the maturation level and environmental experiences of all participants involved in all activities. "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee" (Psalm 119, KJV).

The knowledge of the Word of God is paramount in applying the principles of God. Implementing the "Intersection of Christ and Culture:" will include learning the Word that powers the principles encountered in each activity. Three basic tenants are learning it, (memorizing), link it, and live it. Memory verses are remembered best by repetition. Means of repetition need not be redundant. This is an area where participants can create their method of repetition and share it with their cohorts. Games can be used to

facilitate memorization. Link the verse to a picture, activity, motion, or melody. Visual, auditory, and kinesthetic cues will provide a multisensory stimulus. The third technique is to live it. Encourage students to analyze the verse and plan to teach it.

Developing evaluative skills is crucial to making choices. The emphasis of the model is to give participants an opportunity to analyze, assess, and evaluate cultural influences before they integrate and accept these views into their thoughts and behavior patterns. Many activities will begin with a cultural idea that will be critically analyzed and examined by biblical criteria to determine if that view is biblically acceptable and sound.

Family influence and family constructs are important to the spiritual development of all members of the family, including the youngest members of the family. The economic circumstances and the family response to these circumstances affect the coping skills of youthful members of said family. When considering the spiritual formation of the youth, the church must involve the family in this process. With the help of a family liaison, the program manager will design activities and lessons where the youth participants will engage their adult family members with the learning activities and application of these biblical concepts into their family life. These joint adventures will enhance the family bond. The design of the joint activities will consider the definition, construct, maintenance, and validity of family groups. These joint activities will help create a sense of belonging for adult family members who are not part of the church community. These activities will take into consideration the time constraints of the family and schedule these activities at the context site when possible. Others may be engaged in at home. The location will dictate the design of the activity. Each activity will include

reflections and evaluation of the efficacy of the activity. Evaluation forms will be designed to supply feedback and means of improvement. This portion of the sessions will give practice in critical thinking and evaluative skills.

The major goals for the project and the activities are to produce spiritual growth and a transformed life. The vision of the program is to present God's Word in such a way that a discernable change produces a light that cannot be distinguished by the darkness of a contrary cultural viewpoint or a worldview presented by detractors of biblical principles.

The environment of learning is not always a 'classroom' but can be a trip to the local museum to engage in cultural activities that stimulate the understanding of past cultural influence and how they relate to today's society. An example is a discussion of the idol gods of the Roman empire and their worship and how it leads to today's mainstream practices. The ancient practices of worship have become standard practice in today's culture and many Christians do not recognize or perceive its pervasiveness in culture today.

Ministry cannot be solely dependent on learning theories and bible stories from an ancient society to captivate today's generation, because of cultural and community norms are changing rapidly and a proliferation of knowledge from varying ideologies, the church must be intentional and committed to keep biblical principles the message of the ministry as well as al missional efforts. The teaching must include teaching for meaning and relevance for all generations. Educators must lead student to examine the contex of biblical stories and reflect on how they relate to our realities. We must lead them to understand the scripture is written for all time and all people. When student can see

themselves in a biblical encounter they can acknowledge the relevance of that biblical precept. When teaching for meaning has occurred the student can recognize the connectedness and the irreconcilable differences in concepts or behavior. This occurrence is a powerful tool for decision making. As meanings are revealed to them it can have a transforming effect on our lives.[2]

The educator's responsibility is to create a christ centered classroom that is mot only to teach biblical principals but is a p;ace where these principals are exhibited.The most effective learning occurs when the student feels comfortable enough to take the risk of sharing ideas, concerns, doubts and knowledge. The back to college a Blog for on online learners gives a list of practical ways to create a Christian classroom environment"

Practical ways to create a Christ centered classroom environment

1. Foster a culture of respect treat each student with respect, acknowledging their unique contributions
2. Promoted open communication for students and teacher to address issues honestly and directly.
3. Set clear expectations based on biblical standards.
4 Integrate Bible principals int lessons to reinforce Christian values, and several relevance of these principals in daily lives
5. Create an environment of encouragement; Foster an atmosphere where students feel encouraged to explore, learn and grow.
6. Pray regularly in corporate prayer into classroom routine. Pray for wisdom in teaching and the Holy Spirit's guidance in the classroom.
7. Encourage service and comparison: Instill a sense of service and compassion in students as they put it in to action.

The implementation of the "Intersection of Christ and Culture" aspires to recognize and analyze new scholarship but hold fast to the foundational biblical truths.

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[2] Foster, Charles R. "Educating Congregations; The Future of Christian Education, Nashville, Abington Press 1994 as cited in the article "Is faith obsolete"

“The Model for Spiritual Formation” is designed to address the present-day challenges that confront our youth but employ solid biblical precepts that will enable this generation of youth to navigate the landmines of the spiritual enemy and live victorious lives that will impact the culture of the home, school, church, and community. Activities will employ fundamental truths without diluting the principles and prevent the Word from being polluted by cultural precepts and ideologies.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

For the purposes of this project, the chosen Biblical passage is Deuteronomy 6:11-14.

> Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the ordinances — that the Lord your God charged me to teach you to observe in the land that you are about to cross into and occupy, so that you and your children and your children's children may fear the Lord your God all the days of your life and keep all his decrees and his commandments that I am commanding you, so that your days may be long. Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe them diligently, so that it may go well with you and so that you may multiply greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, as the Lord, the God of your ancestors, has promised you. 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. When the Lord your God has brought you into the land that he swore to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you — a land with fine, large cities that you did not build, houses filled with all sorts of goods that you did not fill, hewn cisterns that you did not hew, vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant — and when you have eaten your fill, take care that you do not forget the Lord, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. The Lord your God you shall fear, him you shall serve, and by his name alone you shall swear. Do not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who are all around you.'[1]

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1 Deuteronomy 6:1-14, New Revised Standard Version. Unless otherwise noted, all scripture references in this document are from the NRSV.

Exegetical Analysis

There is a biblical precedent for creating a curriculum of spiritual formation for a generation that is entering into a changing culture and sociality in the bible.

Your God charged me to teach you to observe in the that you are about to cross into and occupy so that you and your children and children's children may fear the Lord your God all the days of your life and keep all his decrees and commandments that I am commanding you, so that your days may be long (Deuteronomy 6:1-10, NRSV).

The book of Deuteronomy is considered the fifth book of the Hebrew bible. Scholars agree that the book was written by Moses and other contributors. The authorship of Deuteronomy, in some ways, may be difficult to determine as proposed. Patrick D. Miller discusses "the aims, interventions, and ideologies of the book."[2] Miller indicates that there are three major proposals that contribute to the authorship of Deuteronomy. One view is from prophetic circles due to its emphasis on zeal for obedience to the covenant law. The focus is on the issue of apostasy, its claim of sovereign God of Israel, concern for social justice, criticism of Kingship not guided by the Lord's instruction, the conviction of Israel's election by the Lord and what it says about the love of God and the portrait of Moses as a prophet. The second proposal of Deuteronomy originated in Levitical priestly circles encouraged by Gerhard von Rad. Von Rad indicated that priests would be the logical ones to maintain and interpret ancient scrolls because they were charged with transporting the ark of the covenant and protecting sacred writing.[3] The third major _____

2. Patrick Miller, Deuteronomy, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1990), 5-7.

proposal is that Deuteronomy originated in wisdom and scribal circles. This would include Judges, legal minds, and court scribes with access to documents.

Wisdom is a theme espoused throughout the book and is expected to be exhibited by all judges (Deut. 1:13 and 16:19). Understanding, transmitting, and obeying the law is held in high esteem and rewarded when Israel's citizens live accordingly.[4] R.E. Clements extensively discusses the anthropological debates of Israel's establishment as a nation. Norman Gottwald assumes through anthropological ideology that the Israelites were a nomadic people with no leadership structure in place before the entrance into Canaan. All people were equal and would come together against a common enemy. The tribes of Israel were not true tribes but clans of families.[5] Contrary to Gottwald's perception of the establishment of Israel as a nation, Lemche also, through the ideology of anthropology, examined not only nomadic people and their lifestyles but also how Israel's nationalism could be traced to an incident that happened within the walls of Canaan.

The conclusion is that Israel as a nation can best be studied and understood through the lens of an overall study of the Pentateuch and Deuteronomistic history. Clement writes, "It is clear from this that the primary forum for the discussion of Israel's origins had become the study of the date and composition of the Pentateuch and Deuteronomistic history. Anthropology can only play a supporting and not a central role in this matter."[1] According to Clement, the Israelites were entitled to the land they possessed in the ancient Middle East because of God's promise to Abram. Clement states, "These considerations alone that concern for establishing Israel's entitlement to the land it comes to occupy and to justify the introduction of Monarchy, thereby creating a

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[1] Clements, *Deuteronomy*, 39.

national community."[2] God's directive is to not just memorize the commands but to place them on doorposts of homes and on the body to bear witness to those around them of the sovereign God. Finally, Clement suggests that the title of the book describes the law of Moses given to the children in the plains of Moab.[3] The study revealed that though the scholarship established the nation of Israel at the time of the entrance into Canaan, come together against a common enemy. Yet R.E Clement the tribes of Israel were not true tribes but clans of families. [9] Contrary to Gottwald's perception of the establishment of Israel as a nation, Lemche's, also through the ideology of anthropology examined not only nomadic people and their lifestyles but how Israel's nationalism could be traced to an incident happening within the walls of Canaan. Lemche' extensively studied though lens of anthropology many different nomadic people thus concluding that the nationality of Israel, stemmed from a specific event that happened with in the walls of Canaan not before the entrance to land. Something happened, to bring together the people who practiced Jewish Religious tradition, together thus making them a nation. The covenant with YWHW had nothing to do with the creation of Israel as a nation. YWHW

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[2] Clements, *Deuteronomy*, 6.

[2] R. E. Clements, *The World of Ancient Isreal: Sociology, Anthropological and Political Perspectives* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 6.

3.Gerhard von Rad, Deuteronomy: A Commentary (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1966).

4.Miller, Deuteronomy, 5-7.

5.Ronald E. Clements, ed. Deuteronomy, vol. II, in The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes, NIB (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 1998), 7-30.

established a relationship with Abraham in Genesis when YWHW told Abram he would make him a father of nations (Genesis chapter 17).

Creating the Nation of Israel

R.E. Clements extensively discusses the anthropological debates of Israel's establishment as a nation. Norman Gottwald assumes through the use of anthropological ideology that the Israelites were a nomadic people who had no leadership structure in place prior to the entrance into Canaan. Gottwald believed that the Israelite peoples were equal and had no hierarchical structure and characterized them as a tribal unit that would

The conclusion is that Israel as a nation can best be studied and understood through the lens of an overall study of the Pentateuch and Deuteronomistic history. Clement writes "It is clear from this that the primary forum for the discussion Israel's origins had become the study of the date and composition of the Pentateuch and Deuteronomistic history. Anthropology can only play a supporting and not a central role in this matter"[10] According to Clement the Israelites were intitled to the land they possessed in ancient middle east because of the promise God made to Abram. "These considerations alone that concern for establishing Israel's entitlement to the land it come to occupy and to justify the introduction of Monarchy thereby creating a national community".[11]

Gods' directive is to not just memorize the commands but to place them on door post of homes, and on the body to bear witness to those around them of the sovereign God. Ronald E. Clement suggesting the title of the book describing the law of Moses

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9Deuteronomy. Vol. II, in The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twele Volumes NIB, by Ronald E. Clements. Nashville: Abington Press, 1998.27-30.

given to the Children in the plains of Moab. [12] Study revealed that thou the scholarship establishes the nation of Israel at the time of the entrance into Canaan, YWHW established a relationship with Abraham in Genesis when YWHW told Abram he would make him a father of nations. Genesis chapter 17. Deuteronomy was written to build character, faith, and trust in God.

The themes of Deuteronomy

There are several forms introduced in the Book of Deuteronomy, the most prevalent are the religious regulations, and ethical directives. The directive to remember God and what he has done for the ancestors is also prevalent. The teaching of the children and grandchildren diligently and continuously so when asked, why there are ordinances the parents could easily remember and recount the goodness of God. Historically they would be able to recount and worship God in the moment. Acknowledging the sovereignty of God not only remembering but also reaping the promises God made as a covenant with the people. The remembrance led to the recommitment to the covenant YWHW made with Abraham.

Historical and cultural

R.E. Clement by taking an in-depth look at the anthropological, historical, and cultural settings of ancient Israel. The concept of divine promises and the establishment of Israel as a nation and the chosen people of Yahweh. _____

10.Deuteronomy. Vol. II, in The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twele Volumes NIB, by Ronald E. Clements. Nashville: Abington Press, 1998. 31.

11.Deuteronomy. Vol. II, in The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twele Volumes NIB, by Ronald E. Clements. Nashville: Abington Press, 1998. 6.

12.Clements, R.E. The World of Ancient Isreal. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989 7.

Previous studies suggest a covenant bond between the Israelites and God which include a divine promise. Understanding this relationship helps to identify and solidify the concept of religious traditions, Sociological and Anthropological directives given by Yahweh to his people.[13] The children of Israel wander the wilderness because they didn't trust in the God who had brought them out of bondage in Egypt the ancestors trusted God to provide direction, they had doubts, but they experienced God's love and protection from Egyptian oppressors i.e. the parting of the red sea, pillars of fire and smoke manna daily, yet they failed to trust and believe God would deliver on his promise to give a land filled with milk and honey. Forty years of wandering and they did not remember God's protection in the wilderness. They had a lack of faith and trust that dated back to the exodus from Egypt. God's directive was a reminder and a renewal of the trust and faith the children of Israel once had, remembering by puts God's provisions front and center in the minds of the new generation of Israelites.

Audience of the Time

Moses' audience was unaware of the commandments from God to their ancestors. Lack of knowledge did not give excuse for bad behavior. Gods' instructions were specific and direct. The adults were taught and reminded of the commandments additionally they (the adults) were directed not only to remember but to teach the new generation of children and their grandchildren to be faithful and adhere to commandments given by God. having lived the nomadic lifestyle many young people had no idea how to navigate the life and cultural obstacle they would encounter within the new culture. God provided a roadmap to give his children direction and clues as to how to avoid the pitfalls and stumbling block of society. These were standards and guardrails to living life. God's directives were given by Moses just as they had been given the first time.

The People were from a nomadic lifestyle relying on Gods daily provision and protection, to preparing to put down roots among people who have starkly different values. The social directives given were specific and detailed. There was a combination of the religious rituals and social living that culminated in the spreading of YWHW's desire for humankind throughout the land that was occupied by Israel. [14] the religious foundation for Israel to not only be a separate people but also a people devoted to YWHW.[15]

This book is set in Moab as Moses gives his final instructions to Israel as they prepare to cross the Jordan River. This passage is part of the broader section that the NIB titles "the call to Diligent observances," (p.341). It not only mandates a loyalty to God but also sets a foundation of governance for the newly formed nation that they would establish. This broader section rehearses the promises of God, the freedom from Egypt, and the passing the law to this new generation. This portion is ascribed to Moses and other more legalistic and civic portions have been ascribed to others. This conclusion is reached by the examination of the literary format and language. The focus of the book begins with a call to gather together, then a call to listen followed by a call to teach and remember. The beginning sets the stage of the entire book, Calling the people together with attentive ears to the words that will be spoken. Moses is about to deliver the most important sermon of the children of Israel's life. Then there is

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14.Clements, R.E. The World of Ancient Isreal. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989 7-8

15.Deuteronomy." In Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Backround of the Old .Testament, by William Sanford LaSor David Allan Hubbard Frederic William Bush, 175-189.

the call to listen it may appear that the call to gather should have been enough but the emphasis to listen is significant because it puts an emphasis on paying attention to what is said, it could be a matter of life or death. The next movement includes the directive to teach, the parents and elders are to teach these commandments to the children and their grandchildren. Finally, to call to an action by the children. To never forget where they came from and who brought them to this place

Many of this generation that would enter into the promised land, did not fully comprehend the experienced deliverance from Egypt and had to be informed of the miracles of the forty-year journey and the code of conduct that they should follow once they were there. The chosen passage, Deuteronomy 6:1-14 takes the form of a sermon that informs the travelers of the love of their God for them and the reverence that they should have for their God. The lack of comprehension and experience with God, lead to the need for instructions by God in the person of Moses.

The theological movement of the book establishes God as the one and only God.

Contrary to the surrounding people, the Israelites were laying the foundation for monotheism as the truth and only truth. They were to teach the children and the grandchildren of the love and faithfulness of the Creator. Moses also established the creed of the Israelite people.

"Hear O Israel the Lord our God "is one, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and all your might."[4]

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[4] Deuteronomy." In *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Backround of the Old Testament*, by William Sanford LaSor David Allan Hubbard Frederic William Bush, 175-189. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991.182

The Shema or call to Israel to listen attentively is found several times in the pericope. Each time it appears the following verse is important or a command that is significant to the directions being given by Moses[5]

The narrative has the elements that were uncoached in the original ten commandments. Verses one thru three establishes God's authority for the adherence to the law which is a gift from God. The tenor of the admonishment to fear God is not one of judgment but of love. The fear found in verse 2 is not interpreted as dread but one of reverence. The statute and ordinances come with a promise of long life, productivity, and protection. The first call to gather and listens while on the shores of the Jorden River the children were in great anticipation for the entrance to the realization of the promise God made to their ancestors. The children of Israel were directed to write the law on their door post and wear it on their clothing so that those they can in contact
with would know YWHW is the true and living God. "Deuteronomy stresses that the Israelites are to do all that the Lord commanded, once they enter Canaan.

Verses 4-9 gives a description of the transference of the "law" to this new generation portrays an urgency for compliance. It suggests that they must be ever mindful of the instruction. These precepts and behaviors must be taught at an early age and continued reminders must be set in place as they grow and go about their daily activities. The placement of the instruction on the door posts of their homes and the attachment on their bodies suggests that not only should they be reminded, but all with whom they come in contact would recognize who was in control of their lives.

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[5] (Bultman, Deuteronomy 2001) Barton, John and John Muddiman,. "The Oxford Bible Commentary." In *Deuteronomy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Verse five gives a command to love God and is paramount to the preparatory teaching of the new generation. The command describes the urgency for the expression of the depth of one's love for God. This verse also connects with verses 1-4 by highlighting the depth of one's love. If you love with your entire being, there will be no desire to have any other gods before me. The content of the verse suggests one must totally submit to the will and purpose of God. Love God with all your heart follow the commands given to you. Put no other god before him Idolatry, leads to destruction.

Verse six admonishes the people to keep the commandment a second time. As the repeating of the admonishment gives great weight to the importance of the commandment. After emphasizing the importance of loving God whole heartedly Moses says it a second time to make it plain that this is the most important command they will hear before crossing the Jordan River.

An urgent commitment to instruct the children of every generation suggests that there will be temptations to resist in the new land. Innovative ideas, practices and customs will entice the young generation to disobedience. This discourse serves as a warning of things to come and is an example of God's process of leading His people, revealing His attributes of sovereignty and omniscience. The establishment of a constant reminder also emphasizes God has provided a mechanism for their escape from the entrapment of a new culture.

The pericope's main theme of teaching the children of Israel the precepts and principles of God that were given to the ancestors before they wandered in the wilderness for forty years. These Israelites never knew the commandments and directives of God. Therefore, God commanded Moses prior to his death to give the instructions once more

before the Israelites inhabited the promise land so they could withstand the pressures of culture. These directives not only instructed how they should live but how they were to remember what God had done for their people. Verse seven highlights the way the children should be taught. The directive to recite the commands, statutes and ordinances daily and often will keep them at the forefront of one's mind.

The theme of God as one who acts and does things that benefit the people is a part of the theological narrative. Moses reminds the people of the activities of God for the ancestors and admonishes them to remember, relate and reiterate those stories to the children so that they never forget the goodness of God.

The theme of a covenant with God was not just that of the Israelites but also of the surrounding people. This ideology was from the Assyrians and the Hittites as a treaties for how the people related to the King of the land. Deuteronomy appears to take the form of those treaties substituting YWHW for the king of the land. [6]

Moses established these commands under the direction of God as not only a reminder of where they had come from but who brought the to this place. This creed also reestablishes the command give to the first group of people, Monotheism is the term, though they would be surrounded by groups of people who worship many gods and have many other practices the children of Israel were to worship only one God the only God there is the one who brought the ancestors out of bondage and the one who continues to sustain them now.

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[6] Bultmann, Christoph, Barton, John and John Muddiman,. "The Oxford Bible Commentary." In Deuteronomy. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Research revealed that God's people were surrounded by enemies, yet God was faithful to protect them and give them possession of the land that was promised to Abraham.

Forms

Several forms are introduced in the Book of Deuteronomy. The most prevalent are the religious regulations and ethical directives. The directive to remember God and what he has done for the ancestors is also prevalent. When the children and grandchildren asked why there was a memorial, the parents could easily remember and recount the goodness of God. Historically, they would be able to recount and worship God in the moment. Acknowledging the sovereignty of God not only remembering but also reaping the promises God made as a covenant with the people. The remembrance led to the recommitment to the covenant YWHW made with Abraham.

Historical and Cultural

Clement also unpacks an in-depth look at the anthropological, historical, and cultural settings of ancient Israel. Specifically, he studies the concept of divine promises and the establishment of Israel as a nation and the chosen people of Yahweh. Previous studies suggest a covenant bond between the Israelites and God, which includes a divine promise. Understanding this relationship helps to identify and solidify the concept of religious traditions and the sociological and anthropological directives given by Yahweh to his people.[7] The children of

Israel wandered the wilderness because they did not trust in the God who had brought them out of bondage in Egypt. The ancestors trusted God to provide direction;

[7] Clements, The World of Ancient Israel, 7-8.

they had doubts but experienced God's love and protection from Egyptian oppressors, i.e., the parting of the Red Sea, pillars of fire, and smoke manna daily.

Yet, they failed to trust and believe God would deliver on his promise to give a land filled with milk and honey. Forty years of wandering, and they did not remember God's protection in the wilderness. They had a lack of faith and trust that dated back to the exodus from Egypt. God's directive was a reminder and a renewal of the trust and faith the children of Israel once had, remembering that creating a memorial puts God's provisions front and center in the minds of the new generation of Israelites.

Audience of Time

This audience was unaware of the commandments for God to their ancestors. Lack of knowledge did not give an excuse for bad behavior. God's instructions were specific and direct. The adults were taught and reminded of the commandments. Additionally, the adults were directed not only to remember but to teach the new generation of children and their grandchildren to be faithful and adhere to commandments given by God.

Likewise, having lived the nomadic lifestyle, many young people had no idea how to navigate the life and cultural obstacles they would encounter within the new context. God provided a roadmap to give his children direction and clues as to how to avoid the pitfalls and stumbling blocks of society—standards and guardrails to living life. God's directives were given by Moses just as they had been given the first time: Love God with all your heart and follow the commands. Put no other god before him, for idolatry leads to destruction.

Social Economic

The People went from a nomadic lifestyle relying on God's daily provision to putting down roots among people who have starkly different values. Even at the writing of the book of Deuteronomy, the Israelites were surrounded by enemies, the Assyrians to the north and the Babylonians to the south. The social directives given were specific and detailed. There was a combination of religious rituals and social living that culminated in the spreading of YWHW's desire for humankind throughout the land that was occupied by Israel.[8] The children of Israel were directed to write the law on their door post and wear it on their clothing so that those they came in contact with YWHW, the true and living God.

The laws found in the book of Deuteronomy are a reiteration of the Laws Moses gave the ancestors. Hubbard and Bush, in *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament*, describes the ritual offerings of sacrifices. The new directive centralized the form and place of sacrifices at the temple found in Jerusalem. This gave the religious foundation for Israel to not only be a separate people but also a religion devoted to YWHW.[9] "Deuteronomy stresses that the Israelites are to do all that the Lord commanded once they enter Canaan. This is the reason behind the law of the "single sanctuary" (Dt 12:14).[22] Deuteronomy is described as the fifth book of the Hebrew Bible. Its title is derived from Deuteronomy 17:18, which suggests "the second law." This book is set in Moab, where Moses gives his final instructions to Israel

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[8] David Allan Hubbard and Frederic William Bush, eds., "Deuteronomy," In *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 175-189.

[9] Hubbard and Bush, eds., "Deuteronomy," 182.

as they prepare to cross the Jordan River. This passage is part of the broader section that the NIB titles "The Call to Diligent Observances."[23] It not only mandates loyalty to God but also sets a foundation of governance for the new nations they would establish. This broader section rehearses the promises of God, the freedom from Egypt, and the giving of the law to this new generation. This portion is ascribed to Moses, and other more legalistic and civic portions have been ascribed to others. This conclusion is reached by the examination of the literary format and language.

The generation that would enter into the promise land had not experienced the deliverance from Egypt and had to be informed of the miracles of the forty-year journey and the code of conduct that they should follow once they were there. The chosen passage, Deuteronomy 6:1-10 takes the form of a sermon that informs the travelers of the love of their God for them and the reverence they should have for their God. Their lack of firsthand experiences with God, they are instructed by Moses in the person of God the Father. The description of the transference of the "law" to this new generation portrays an urgency for compliance. It suggests that they must be mindful of the instructions. These precepts and behaviors must be taught at an early age, and continued reminders must be set in place as they grow and go about their daily activities. The placement of the instructions on the doorposts of their homes and the attachment on their bodies suggests that not only should they be reminded, but all with whom they come in contact would recognize who was in control of their

lives. _____

[22] Hubbard and Bush, eds., "Deuteronomy,"180.

[22]Clements, Deuteronomy, 341

An urgent commitment to instruct the children of every generation suggests that there will be temptations to resist in the new land; new ideas, practices, and customs will entice the young generation. This discourse serves as a warning of things to come and is an example of God's process of leading His people, revealing His attributes of sovereignty and omniscience. Establishing a constant reminder also emphasizes that God has provided a mechanism for their escape from the entrapment of a new culture. The pericope's main theme is teaching the children of Israel the precepts and principles of God that were given to the ancestors before they wandered in the wilderness for forty years. These Israelites never knew the commandments and directives of God. Therefore, God commanded Moses prior to his death to give the instructions once more before the Israelites inhabited the promise land so they could withstand the pressures of culture and their surroundings on the relationship between God and the people. These directives not only instructed how to live but also how to remember what God had done for their people. Moreover, this pericope encourages exploration of the concept of creating a spiritual foundation for discipleship.

The model curriculum begins the work of spiritual formation that will inform the youth to consider Christ in their daily decisions when encountering culture. The intersection of Christ and culture can be a daunting task, but if given tools to critically think about what God wants for the lives of his creation, it will affect the culture or society in which they live. Every generation has to be instructed by a child so that there is continuity in the message of salvation. This book of the Bible was written to build character, faith, and trust in God.

*Theological Understandin*g

The theological movement of the book establishes God as the one and only God. Contrary to the surrounding people, the Israelites established monotheism as the only truth. They taught the children and the grandchildren about the love and faithfulness of the Creator. Moses also established the creed of the Israelite people. "Hear O Israel the Lord our God "is one, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and all your might" (Dt 6:4).

The theme of God as one who acts and does things that benefit the people is a part of the theological narrative. Moses reminds the people of the activities of God for the ancestors. He admonishes them to remember, relate, and reiterate those stories to the children so that they never forget the goodness of God. The theme of a covenant with God was not just that of the Israelites but also the surrounding people. This ideology was that of the Assyrians and the Hittites as treaties for how the people related to the king of the land. Deuteronomy appears to take the form of those treaties, substituting YWHW for the king of the land.[10]

Moses established these commands under the direction of God as not only a reminder of where they had come from but who brought them to this place. This creed also reestablishes the command given to the first group of people. Monotheism is the term, though they would be surrounded by groups of people who worship many gods and have many other practices. The children of Israel were to worship only one God; the only God there was the one who brought the ancestors out of bondage and the one who continues to sustain them now. Research revealed that God's people were surrounded by

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[10] John Barton and John Muddiman, "Deuteronomy," in *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001), 135-138.

enemies, yet God was faithful to protect them and give them possession of the land that was promised to Abraham.

Conclusion and Reflection

Both the first and second section of the scripture hinge upon the directive of loving God whole heartedly, this first look instructing the people to love God whole heartedly set the tone for teaching. Who should be taught and by whom should they be taught is found in the pericope. The second directive sets forth what should be taught. And how it should be taught. The third section of the pericope give the methodology of teaching which will be incorporated into the final project. the entire pericope is an outline for formatting and educational tool for the development of disciples of Christ. One is encouraged to explore of the concept for creating a spiritual foundation for discipleship. The model curriculum begins the work of spiritual formation that will inform the youth to consider Christ in their daily decisions when encountering culture. The intersection of Christ and Culture can be a daunting task, but if given tools to critically think about what God wants for the lives of his creation there will be an effect on the culture or society in which they live. Every generation has to be instructed from a child so that there is a continuity in the message of salvation This projects objective is to encourage spiritual formation of the young and giving participants the tools to resist the entrapments of culture by following Christ. Using the example of Moses with the children of Israel, making it plain and simplistic for varying age groups will achieve the objective of the project.

This objective is to encourage the spiritual formation of the young and give participants the tools to resist the entrapments of culture by following Christ. Using the

example of Moses with the children of Israel, making it plain and simplistic for varying age groups will achieve the objective of the project. As indicated by Genesis Chapter 17, the establishment of the Covenant between Abram and YWHW is the time and place of the establishment of Israel as a nation.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

The evolution of the Sunday School movement is the foundation of Christian and secular education. The introduction of the Sunday School movement began with Raikes and his desire to implement a program that would prevent mischief by unsupervised children in Gloucester,

England, during the early 1700s. This chapter will explore the creation and evolution of the Sunday School movement in America. A Chronological exploration of the movement beginning in America will include the informal structure of the 1600s.

The influence of the British model was evident in the growth and transformation of religious schools in America. In time, this model will also influence the formation of secular education in America. The cultural changes sparked a need for different methods and modes of education in America. Major events in the new world demanded a new vision. From the Revolutionary War to the missionary endeavors helped to shape religious, philosophical, and theological thinking throughout the newly formed nation. This discussion will include the Sunday School movements, opposition, and its allies. Further discussion will include the publications, societies, and conventions associated with the Sunday School movement and how it propelled the movement]. Also, the reaction to Sunday Schools in the antebellum South when teaching the enslaved and poor prior to the Civil War and the results of the multiple changes in the movement as culture

changed will be discussed. Finally, the history of the movement will inform the development of Intersection of Christ and Culture: A Model that engages Spiritual Formation while examining Biblical Principles and Cultural Influence,

There will also be a focus on the individuals associated with the movement, its inception, and its momentum from home school by parents to the antebellum South, the Civil War, and reconstruction. An examination of socioeconomic issues can facilitate changes in the lives of people and their reactions to the situation. Sunday School societies, conventions, and denominational publications have affected the Sunday School movement in relation to cultural changes at the time. Further, an in-depth examination of cultural changes that inform the project and its objectives will be included. The conclusion of the research will inform the project objective by indicating a linear connection between the need for new methods, how the objectives can be met, and how the proposed outcome of the project can be realized in our changing culture.

The problem of disengaged youth in the structured Christian church leads to the massive exodus of these youth. A lack of biblical understanding, critical thinking skills, and spiritual formation leads to cultural and societal deterioration. "The Intersection of Christ and Culture" proposes that when provided with the skills for critical thinking and the biblical foundations, young people will make better decisions and consider Christ when making those decisions and effect change in culture. Participants will reengage in the activities of the organized Christian church, see the relevance of a personal relationship with Christ, and share the knowledge with their peers. With improved analytical skills, participants will be able to resist the temptations and pitfalls of the culture and society in which they live.

The Sunday School Movement

Education can change the culture. Historical evidence found within the evolution of the Sunday School movement will be uncovered in this research. Culture and society's momentum is circular. Major events within the timeline of the Sunday School movement inform present-day situations. The settlers of the 1600s from England to the New England coast of the new world, the Revolutionary War and its effects on the education of the new immigrants, the beginning of the industry in America, and the Civil War and its consequences all play a major role in the evolution of the Sunday School movement. These events include the introduction of a model from England that informed some of the changes noted and the impact of the Civil War on the religious education of enslaved people and the poor, then the reconstruction period in America and its influence on newly freed slaves in the South. At the end of this research, I will discuss the connection between the historic Sunday School movement and my project objectives.

The evolution of the Sunday School movement is the foundation of Christian and secular education in America. The introduction of the Sunday School movement begins with the influx of settlers from England seeking religious freedom. It should be noted that the Sunday School movement was not initially a religious, organized, and structured endeavor but came with the settlers in the New England colonies. Educational matters were left to families in the home.

In *Sunday-School Movements in America*, Brown indicated that the colonists came to the colonies in 1630; these Massachusetts settlers were of financial means, had religious beliefs, and were formally educated in England. They were clergyman as well as businessmen. Despite the cultural changes the settlers experienced, they did not

neglect the religious education of the youth. These settlers established Harvard College in 1636. Laws were enacted to require masters of the home to catechize the children and servants once a week in religious instruction [1] If financial constraints and lack of books prevented instruction, shortening Catechism was done for the less fortunate. Public Schools were established by law first in Massachusetts in 1647, then throughout the New England colonies soon after.[2] There were no restraints on religious instruction; therefore, schools were free to inject religion into the instruction of the masses.

The economic and cultural differences were evident in the southern colonies as this was a more agrarian society that did not value education as the New England colonies. Colonists were interested in making their fortunes through the hard work of the land, trade, and commerce among those living in the community. In a dissertation entitled: "The Role of the Sunday School Conventions in the Preparation of Protestant Sunday School Teacher, 1832-1903," Freese indicates John Donne spoke with stockholders at a Virginia Company in 1622, admonishing his "ultimate vision" that religion and education were vital to the stability and happiness of the colonies.[3] This time period in American history encompasses the Revolutionary War; the colonists throughout the New World were fleeing to gain religious freedoms. These freedoms encompassed the idea that religion should be based on one's conscience, dictated by the Roman

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[1] Marianna C. Brown, *Sunday-School Movements in America* (New York, NY: Trieste Publishing Company, 2017), 17.

[2] Brown, *Sunday-School Movements in America,* 19.

[3] Doris Freese, "The Role of the Sunday School Conventions in the Preparation of Protestant Sunday School Teacher, 1832-1903," (PhD diss., Loyalty University of Chicago, 1979), 29.

Catholic Church. Freese argues, "While no system of free schools for the entire populace existed, Pilgrims, Anglican, Dutch Reformed, Quaker and other groups made early provision for religious instruction and general education of youth."[4]

The aristocratic community encouraged the education of the youth in their social sphere yet did not think of the least of these among them. The advent of the Revolutionary War, in which the colonists fought for religious freedom. A shift in cultural concerns was present, from religious freedom to the governance of this new land, which became foremost on the minds of the colonists. A new focus on nationalism arose, and religious education waned. Research indicates that the creation of the constitution and ratification of the same (1787). Brown argues that "the ratification of the first ten amendments (1791)"[5] was accomplished in an environment no longer concerned with religious education [6]. The revolutionary period initiated changes in the mindset of the people in the new world; "the distinct separation of church and state"[7] was among the notable changes. Amongst all these political and social changes of the time, a visitor, John Wesley, came from England and held conversations with church leaders about an "experiment" modeled by Journalist Robert Raikes, whose theory was if teaching poor children to read and write also gave them some moral instruction, the prevalence of ignorance could be eradicated.

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[4] Freese, "The Role of the Sunday School Conventions in the Preparation of Protestant Sunday School Teacher, 1832-1903," 29.

Freese, "The Role of the Sunday School Conventions in the Preparation of Protestant Sunday School Teacher, 1832-1903," 31.

[6] Brown, *Sunday-School Movements in America,* 19.
[7] Brown, *Sunday-School Movements in America,* 19.

Robert Raikes is credited with the architecture of the Sunday School movement, yet he was not the only person at the beginning of the movement. Robert Raikes was born in the city of Gloucester, England, on September 14, 1736. He was the son of a prominent journalist. His father was the writer and publisher of the city newspaper. After the sudden death of his father, Raikes inherited the newspaper and vowed to make the paper successful. Although many scholars agree that Raikes was the founder of the movement, after visiting the prisons of the time, Raikes used his newspaper to bring to light the deplorable condition of the persons housed in the prisons. The Industrial Revolution in England brought about a change in culture. The socioeconomic conditions in the eighteenth century are described as "detestable." Many parents were incarcerated for debt or crimes, and the children worked long hours to assist families. Often, the children were left to their own devices. There was no medical care, and "often a man and a woman and a dozen children lived in one room."[8] His initial focus was teaching the prisoners to read. Raikes theorized there was a correlation between ignorance and degradation in society. His thesis was that education will prevent and eradicate vices because vice is caused by ignorance. The first step is teaching the prisoners to read; his first endeavor failed. His reasoning was that adults were set in their ways and not willing to make a change. A mindset change focused on the children in the neighborhood, concentrating on those who were not yet jaded by bad habits.

Raikes found some success, and he paid women in the community a shilling to teach reading in their homes. He then held Catechism in the cathedral courtyard, but the children were suspected of his social status, and few attended. A second location for the

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[8] Chris Clark, *Robert Raikes and the Sunday School Movement* (Derbyshire, UK: n.p., 2015), 1.

school on Sunday was in a kitchen where a teacher he paid in a sooty ally, where the chimney sweeps lived. This indicated to the students that school was for all, regardless of station in society. Another location of the meeting was the Southgate Street Trumpet Inn; this location came with a new teacher, Mrs. Crutchley, who was paid by Raikes and the landlady of the Inn.

While the lesson of reading and writing with the bible as the textbook was standard, Raikes was the disciplinarian. He imposed rules of behavior and moral standards, no cursing and swearing, all based on biblical principles. Family involvement was prominent in that parents were required to administer corporal punishment for those students who did not comply. Within three years, there was a noticeable change in the community. He documented the school and its outcomes in his newspaper.[9]

Several men were acquaintances of Raikes and were known as the "Clapham Sect." This group was made up of William Wilberforce, a staunch abolitionist of the time, and George Whitfield, who preached his first sermon in St. May De Crypt in 1736. This church was located across the street from Raikes' home and the Wesley brothers. This group was frequent visitors to the Raikes' home, where they engaged in discussions about the issues of the day. Raikes' desire to better the society around him required action on the part of an individual within the society. As the Journalist of the city, this responsibility fell to him.[10]

In the new world, the Industrial Revolution had not come, but there was a change in culture based on immigration. Using the Raikes model, Sunday Schools for the poor

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[9] Clark, Robert Raikes and the Sunday School Movement, 1.

[10] Clark, Robert Raikes and the Sunday School Movement, 1.

and disadvantaged, as well as enslaved people and freed Africans, became prevalent. Raikes states, "The first American Sunday School association was founded in Philadelphia in 1790. The leadership consists of different laymen and were not tied to any one denomination."[11] Literature of the Sunday School movement was also important in the development of the curriculum. Each denomination commissioned literature that held the tenets of its particular denomination. Thus, it ensures that the youth will follow the tenets of that denomination and contribute to that church. [12] The first day Sunday School Society was established and organized in 1791 in Philadelphia. The men who formed this society were concerned about the depravity prevalent in the city and gathered to counter the behavior by adopting education for all children in the city, poor or affluent.[13]

The Sunday School movement throughout the New World was present prior to the Civil War. Methodist preachers and missionaries taught at separate times both White and Black children. The mission of the Methodist was to change the culture surrounding them by educating all children. The growth of the cities in the New World brought on the same conditions as those seen in London by Raikes. The introductions of moral and virtues principles found in the Bible appeared to be prudent at the time.

Each portion of the New World proselytized enslaved Africans at this time period. In the North, the Quakers attempted to end slavery and convert enslaved people through the leadership of John Woolman and Benjamín Lay, while the Puritans did not object to

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[11] Robert H. Canary, "The Sunday School as Popular Culture," American Studies: Midcontinent America Studies Journal 9, no. 2 (Fall 1968): 5-13.
Canary, "The Sunday School as Popular Culture," American Studies: Midcontinent America Studies Journal, 5-13.

[13] Henry Fredrick Cope, The Evolution of Sunday School (Boston, MA: Pilgrim Press, 1911), 5-6.

slavery but also converted the enslaved under the leadership of John Eliot and Cotton Mather. Mather had a theological position that the Africans were less than white men and needed protection and care. The conversion of an African in Mather's mind was a freedom of the soul, yet the body is enslaved. As was indicated earlier, the Southerners were skeptical of education for the enslaved for fear of rebellion.[14] Secular education and religious education coexisted at this time. However, there begins to be a concern for the poor and the conditions of the communities.

These Sunday Schools were not without their detractors. Factory owners and high society found that education of the less fortunate would come with conflict and upheaval of the status quo. In the South, slaveholders resisted the education of the enslaved person because some believed that after baptism, the slaves would be free, costing the masters their livelihood.[15] There were laws enacted in the South that specifically stated that slaves were not freed after baptism.[16] In 1787, a Methodist preacher conducted Sunday School for African children in Charleston, South Carolina.[17] Frances Asbury is credited with opening the second school in 1786. Asbury was concerned with the education of the enslaved people.

In 1793, a poor African woman, Katy Ferguson, established the first school in New York City for the benefit of the poor street children where she lived. [18] History

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[14] Anthony Pinn, *Black Church History* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002), 2-4.

[15] Keneth H. Hill, Religious Education in the African American Tradition A Comprehensive Introduction (St Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2007), 16.

[16] Brown, Sunday-School Movements in America (New York, NY: Trieste Publishing Company, 2017), 1.

[17] Brown, Sunday School Movement in America, 22.

[18] Brown, Sunday-School Movements in America, 21.

books state that Africans were not taught to read and write during the time of slavery. Yet, these examples above indicate that there were some Africans who learned and taught reading and writing. The advent of the Civil War, yet another change in the political and cultural landscape, was evident. Multiple schools were scattered throughout this newly formed nation.

The growing pains of development and birth were difficult; not all Sunday Schools were welcomed. There were detractors, factory owners, and aristocrats intimidated by the rise of the middle class who were very vocal about their opposition to the education of the poor. They feared education would lead to conflict and a change in circumstances, culminating with slave uprising against the masters. In the South, where slavery was prevalent and provided a lavish lifestyle for the plantation owners, the slave owners did not want to lose their "free" labor force and, ultimately, their social status. Historically, slave owners refused to educate the enslaved person for the same reason stated above. Slave owners also used portions of the Bible to keep the slaves in line. In *Religious Education in the African American Tradition: A Comprehensive Introduction*, Hill states, "We have already several occasions to show that the Bible has been used as a tool for oppression: slavery, segregation, and racial prejudice have been supported by a selective use of Bible verses."[19]

Raikes indicates there were awakenings as a result of his experiment in Britain, which can be seen in the history of the American Sunday School Movement. They include an awakened awareness of the need for public education for all children despite the awareness of the middle class and upper class of their responsibility to make

[19] Hill, Religious Education in the African American Tradition, 33.

meaningful contributions to society. The production and distribution of quality religious education curriculum materials was the initiation for parents of children to seek education. All these awakenings were the result of the Sunday School movement in society. American Sunday Schools were supported and financed by churches, but the notion of paying taxes for the education of the poor was less palatable for those of means. The American Sunday Schools spawned the need for public school systems that would provide rudimentary education for all people in spite of the sociological and economic station.[20] During the Civil War, the atmosphere in the New World changed again. April 12, 1861, began the Civil War in America with many dissenting opinions. One issue was slavery, states' rights, and the expansion of slavery in the West.

The industry was instrumental in the change of mindsets and people of that time period. People moved from their agrarian lifestyle in rural areas to the crowded cities in hopes of a more prosperous life in the North, while the agrarian lifestyle was prevalent in the South as their livelihoods were reliant on the labor of enslaved people on big plantations. As the change in the economic conditions and the increase in population in America became evident, there was a great disparity in the accumulated wealth in the growing cities. The work of the Sunday Schools was recognized as a change agent. As the schools evolved, there arose a new perspective on the needs of children. During the years between 1780 and 1830, there was a move to see childhood as a stage of life and emphasized that children should not be treated as little adults; thus, accommodation for

[20] Robert Raikes, Robert Raikes His Sunday School and his Friends including Historical Sketches of the Sunday School Cause in Europe and America (Philadelphia, PA: American Baptist Publication Society, 1859).

the children in urban areas were provided through the Sunday School Movement.[21] Prior to the Civil War, the mission of the church was to make converts of enslaved people. Catechism was held on the plantation by some southern slaveholders, yet they monitored the meeting closely to prevent the "corruption" of the enslaved people. The title of these religious educational sessions was not called "Sunday School" because the notion of teaching enslaved people to read and write was distasteful to the masters. Hill states, "The masters 'feared' that Christianity would make slaves not only proud but ungovernable an even rebellion."[22] Again, another shift in the environment in American history, the reconstruction period in the South, marked the North's move to help rebuild the South after the devastation of the Civil War. In 1865, slavery was abolished with the ramifications of the Thirteenth Amendment. [23] Industry came to the South, much like the North. The creation of cities and state governments was on the minds of the people. The northern missionaries and philanthropists were eager to create educational institutions for the Southerners. Sunday Schools and secular schools sprang up across the land. Freed slaves found it important to engage in education and valued education. At this time, there was a divergence of secular and religious education. The churches appeared to take on the task of religious education of the masses with the expressed agenda of "saving souls," while secular education was left to governmental agencies. Education of the poor was their plight.

23.Kenneth O. Gangel, and Warren S. Benson, Christian Education: Its History and Philosophy (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1983), 253.

22 Hill,. Religious Education in the African American Tradition, 30.

23 John D. Pulliam, History of Education in America (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1995), 164.

Contributions to the Sunday School Movement

This research will also explore the people who made significant contributions to the Sunday School movement and the dates and times their contributions occurred. Robert Raikes in England (1736-1811), moved by the plight of poor pin factory worker children, imagined a better society and created a model of school to educate children to read and write as well as moral and socially acceptable behaviors. In *Robert Raikes and the Sunday School Movement,* Clark argues, "The Sunday School Movement" was born. From Raikes's movement and conversations with friends, Hannah Moore (1745-1833) was born in 1745 in Bristol. She went to school until the age of twelve and later taught there. She had a gift for writing and spent her life up until this point writing poems, plays, and other literary works[22] In 1774, she traveled to London, where she met. John Newton, William Wilberforce, and other members of the Clapham Sect Wilberforce suggested that she start a Sunday School. The rural setting was vastly different from the hustle and bustle of the big city, yet there was vast poverty and illiteracy. Her focus was not on poverty but on the lack of moral direction and spiritual comfort within the community in the rural area of Somerset. She founded a house for school mistresses, and a barn was used as a location. There were twelve schools founded over ten years. The financial benefactors were primarily the Clapham sect. Moore's fundamental belief differed from Raikes's; she believed "children are not innocent beings but rather as beings of a corrupt nature and evil disposition." [23] Several other notable names are mentioned in the

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[22] Chris Clark, *Robert Raikes and the Sunday School Movement* (Derbyshire, UK: NP, 2015).
[23] Clark, *Robert Raikes and the Sunday School Movement*.

research; William Fox established "the Society for the Establishment and Support of Sunday School" in 1785 with Prescott Street.

In particular, the Baptist Church and some friends of this organization became the Sunday School Union. Sunday School was a catalyst for the creation of a middle class. Educating and training persons to do "respectable jobs," such as secretaries and Bookkeepers, created a working middle class in England.[24] Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892), who, after his conversion, started teaching Sunday School in America.[25] John Wesley (1703-1792), friend to Raikes, and William Wilberforce (1759-1833) advocated the Sunday School movement in England and America. Each advocated with denominations, Wesley to Methodist Bishop Asbury and Wilberforce

taught Sunday School in America. William Elliot created the first Sunday School Association in America in Virginia in 1792. Samuel Slater (1768-1635), a 1797 Cotton Mill owner, provided space for a Sunday School in Massachusetts. Though this list is not exhaustive, cultural changes have facilitated the need for new and more methods of educating the masses. Beginning with youth is the logical starting point. Research also provided information about the Sunday School publications and associations that provided examples of how denominationalism and secularism impacted the Sunday School movement, and the response to the changes in culture and mindset.

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[24] Nan Soon Song, "Sunday School Revisited: An Alternative to Christian Education of the Church Today?" *Religious Education* 108, no. 2 (2013): 180-192.

[25] Clark, *Robert Raikes and the Sunday School Movement*.

The Sunday School Movement began to take two different paths as the need for secular education was realized. The religious arm began to flourish and develop through organizations,

Unions, Societies, and associations. The American Sunday School Union was established on

January 11, 1791, under the banner of the Sunday School Society. [26] Cope writes,

> The preamble to the constitution of the society stated in part…Whereas, among the youth of every large city, various instances occur on the first day of the week, called Sunday. This day ought to be devoted to religious improvement being employed to the worst of purposes, the depravity of morals and manners. It is the opinion of Sundry persons that the establishment of Sunday School. For effecting that benevolent purpose--- for effecting that benevolent purpose –The requirement included the instruction should be confined to "reading and writing from the Bible and such other moral and religious books as the society may from time to time direct.[27]

The Sunday School Society petitioned the legislature for this school to be a free school, but the universalist origin of American Sunday Schools, Eddy Universalist quarterly, m oct, 1882 pg.

453. These new societies and Unions engaged in acceptance and support duty to the strong missionary efforts of Christianity as the eighteenth century ended [28]

As Sunday School numbers increased, other organizations and associations were formed.

In 1817, several groups came together and were called the Sunday and Adult School Union. From 1820 to 1824, unions from New York, Pittsburgh, and other cities

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[26] Brown, Sunday-School Movements in America, 27.

[27] Cope, The Evolution of Sunday School, 62

[28] Cope, The Evolution of Sunday School, 62.

worked to establish a general organization for the United States. The unions had the support of church denominations, which organized unions. They gave their attention to the publication of suitable literature for Sunday Schools, the selection of scriptural lessons and the preparation of lesson materials, and the organization and maintenance of schools in needy places [29][30]

During the westward expansion, Stephen Paxon and others took the idea of the Sunday School to the Mississippi Valley in 1830, the beginning of the establishment of Sunday Schools in the undeveloped territory. The headquarters was built in the village of Cincinnati. In two years, seventy-eight missionaries had organized one thousand eight hundred sixty-seven schools

32 As the efficiency of the Sunday School was realized, the various established denominations began making Sunday School an integral part of the work of the church and supported its growth during denominational conferences and conventions. The denomination recognized their need for specialization and developed special boards and auxiliaries to plan lessons, methods of teaching, and suitable stipends for itinerant preachers to go out and establish these schools. Each denomination recognized tits need and addressed them accordingly. As a result of the Regional Denominational Unions, the International Sunday School Association was established in 1832. In *The Evolution of Sunday School*, Copes shares that a series of conventions marked the development and growth of the International Association through utilizing the gifts and expertise of the individual Unions, yet each would maintain its autonomy. The officers planned well for the efficient operation of the association for the good of all affiliated. First, the delegates

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[29] Cope, The Evolution of Sunday School, 83.

[30] Cope, *The Evolution of Sunday School,* 84.

to the convention should be a representation of the Sunday School Association rather than churches directly. Second, a committee was appointed to prepare questions and concerns to be addressed at conventions. Third, a decision was made to include all youth, not just the destitute. Cope characterized the association "as an organization naturally conservative, expressing the will not of a few leaders, but of the great bulk of the workers. It has adopted the principle of graded lessons and recognized the validity of educational principles in Sunday School work."[31]

Conclusion

The Christian Church must be mindful of the doctrines held. The Lord's commandments given by Moses and the teaching of Jesus. The great commandment given by Jesus in Mathew 28. All these points must be examined, analyzed, and contemplated to produce a product that brings glory to God. Fulfill the command directed by Christ and produce the desired outcomes. History shows enthusiasm for doing the things that are pleasing to God. Robert Raikes was moved by the condition of the community around him, which was based on his exposure to the mandate from God.

Subsequently, the American counterparts were moved first by the religious education received in England and following the directions found in the Bible for their children. The evolution of the Sunday School movement demonstrates how cultural change and societal shifts affect the necessity for new methods to reach souls for Christ. The history of the evolution of the Sunday School movements illuminates the failings of Some present-day methods and modes of proselytizing youth. The history of the

[31] Cope, *The Evolution of Sunday School,* 100.

evaluation of the Sunday School movement illuminates the shortcomings of the present-day Christian educational systems in Churches today.

In the comprehension of schooling in the age of exponential change, teachers must know how educational institutions developed, their relationship to society, what dangers and opportunities are linked to them, what future developments can be predicted, and the philosophical implications. In short, the theory and practice of education are best revealed through historical, social, philosophical, and psychological foundations[32] The contribution of the Sunday School movement is the foundation of education with important branches, which is evident in English and American society. Its companion branch set the stage for comprehensive biblical study in most biblical studies in most denominations of America's religious communities.

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[32] Patten, History of Education in America, 5.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

Previous chapters have explored the Biblical and Historical foundations of the proposed project. Exegesis of the chosen pericope of Deuteronomy 6:1-14 highlights the sovereignty of God. The sovereignty of God requires remembering the past, relaying historical events, and keeping the miracles, provisions, and commandments foremost on the minds of all generations as they enter into the land of promise. The commandments provide a foundation for all aspects of life in the new land. The commandments provide a framework for the governance of the new nation and a base for relationships among generations as the nation grew and prospered. Moses provided rigorous and systematic instruction on fundamental principles to enable the youth of that time to withstand the onslaught of cultural influences.

The Historical Foundations chapter explored the Sunday School movement and its impact on the present-day Christian education models. The evolution of this movement culminated in the modern-day public-school institutions and Christian education models. Examination of the preceding chapters reveals the use of Liberation Theology with an emphasis on the discipline of Christian Education. Both the Historical and Biblical foundations highlight teaching all generations, present and future, for the continuation and foundation of spiritual formation. The proposed project, "Intersection of Christ and

Culture: A Model that Engages Spiritual Formation While Examining Biblical Principles and Cultural Influences," will provide instructions that emphasize the relevance of the biblical fundamental principles as they transcend time and are applicable to all generations. If participants are immersed in techniques and projects that highlight the relevance of a personal relationship with Christ in today's changing society, there will be a change in the mindset and, subsequently, the community and culture in which they are engaged.

The youth at Bethel United Holy Church in Trenton, New Jersey, as in many cases, do not recognize the importance of Christian principles as they navigate today's cultural changes. They do not understand how the principles found in the Bible inform their daily lives. Like the children of Israel on the banks of the Jordan River, who had a cursory understanding or a vague memory of the past and the captivity, the youth of today have a vague understanding of the captivity they experience because of culture.

The question I asked myself, How does the church engage culture and still be the place for Biblical Principles to shine and the truth. Many churches have engaged culture but compromise principals to maintain membership, and youth engagement the result is lackluster spiritual formation and foundation. When those young people encounter adversity they are more likely to cave under peer pressure and social influences.

In my minds, the answer is a robust education and learning Biblical principles that lead to a strong spiritual foundation and spiritual formation.

Liberation from physical captivity in Egypt for the children of Israel and spiritual captivity of sin in today's culture are comparable. Exploring Liberation Theology and sociological influences are relevant in the spiritual formation of each Christian and how

the processes influence Christian education and the relevance of the biblical principles. If the participants are engaged in a systematic and intense immersion in biblical principles, they will form a stronger understanding of the spiritual foundation and the relevance of a personal relationship with Christ. This stronger spiritual foundation will encourage a change in their worldview from a culture-driven to a biblical worldview.

Because of the rapid development and pervasiveness of modern marketing techniques, the morays, and forays of our culture, the Church must not resist the challenging questions of cultural influences.

Statistical research from Barna Research Center gives reasons why there is a mass exodus and disengagement. Other research shows other reasons for the mass exodus, as discussed in previous foundations. Young people are leaving the organized church. This is the problem at the chosen context. May are leaving for educational endeavors, others are leaving because of disillusioned about religion, still other feel they have outgrown the messages of Church. Spiritual formation includes the disciplines of Bible reading, prayer, and meditation. When formulating a curriculum for Christian education, the church must also include rigorous and systematic biblical instruction and fundamental principles to enable the youth to withstand the onslaught of cultural influences. Youth leaders and pastors alike are cognizant of the exodus of Christian youth in the activities of the church and the principles of Christianity. How can the church be involved in stemming the tide of the exodus? The aim of this project is the spiritual formation that emphasizes the relevance of biblical principles and precepts in today's culture. Recent scholarship reveals that eighteen- to twenty-year-olds are the youth that are disengaging. Pew Research, Barna Group, Lifeway Research, and Cross-Examined.org researched a group

of eighteen- to twenty-two-year-olds and found that youth are disengaging in church activities at an alarming rate. Research consensus indicates that there are at least six reasons for the departure. (Appendix E) Relevance and application of biblical David Kinnaman includes the findings in his book *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians are Leaving Church and Rethinking Church.* Lifeway Research, a ministry of Life Way Christian Research (Appendix F), a publishing arm of the Southern Baptist Convention, reported similar reasons as the above-cited reports. Ken Ham and Avery Foley coauthored the book *Already Gone*: *Why Young People are Leaving Christianity*, which analyzed the answers given by college students to the question posed by researchers, including their findings, commissioned by the Americans Research Group. Ham and Foley consolidated the research from the new research from the Pew Research Center (Appendix G), which answered questions addressing the exodus of youth from the church. Finally, CrossExamined.org is an evangelical, inter-denominational Christian ministry.

They seek to present evidence that the Bible is true. They do not require others in the body of Christ with whom they partner to hold certain positions on many doctrinal or theological debates within the church. While CrossExamined.org believes these issues are significant, their primary concerns are with the effects of false ideologies on the world and the body of believers (particularly our young people). As a statement of faith, CrossExamined.org agrees with and holds to The Apostle's Creed.[1] Cross Examined.org explored and researched the atheistic influences in culture and found a significant reason

[1] CrossExamined.org, "What Is the Cross-Examined Statement of Faith," accessed December 1, 2024, https://crossexamined.org/about/

for the exodus. The unrelenting influence of societal and cultural influences is bombarding the youth of this age group. Cross Examined found that atheistic professors in institutions of higher learning, plus the lack of firm foundations in biblical principles and precepts, leads to the exacerbated exit of 18–22-year-olds.[2]

While much of the research reveals the departure of young adults from eighteen to twenty-two years old, the church must examine the lack of enthusiasm for church involvement in a much younger demographic. When formulating a curriculum for Christian education, the church must include rigorous and systematic instruction of foundational precepts. This is important for today's youth to withstand the onslaught of cultural influences. "The Intersection of Christ and Culture: A Model for Spiritual Formation that examines Biblical Principles and Cultural influences" will provide a response to the exodus. The purpose of this project is to create a curriculum for spiritual formation for multigenerational students. This curriculum can be expanded and adapted for younger and older students to provide continuity in developing youth disciples. The introduction of firm foundational biblical principles and precepts at an earlier age will increase the critical thinking process of students and prevent them from becoming disengaged as they grow. An established biblical worldview decreases the influence of society and culture.

Definitions

The *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* defines theology as "Language or discourse about God. It can be a scientific methodological attempt to understand God's

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[2] Norman Geisler, and Frank Tuerk, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to be and Atheist* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004).

divine revelations. It has classically been seen as 'faith seeking understanding.'"[3] Practical theology is defined as "Critical reflection on the church's life in both corporate and individual expression. Often included are disciplines such as Christian Education."[4]

Liberation is defined as "a release from a form of captivity into freedom. A theological image of Christian salvation as a release from the captivity of sin into the freedom given in Jesus Christ (Gal 5:1, 13; 1 Peter 2:16)."[5]

Culture, for the purposes of this work, is characterized by the present-day social norms and practices of the twenty-first century. The environment highlighted on television, in printed materials, social media and movies has a profound influence on informing biblical beliefs. These media influences shape the worldview and behavior of today's culture. Finally, the conclusion and reflection of the study overall will be integrated into the preparation and execution of the proposed project.

Liberation Theology

Liberation by cultural standards is freedom from oppression. Socioeconomic, racial disparities and political systems are designed to expand these types of oppression. Culture has encouraged the church to focus on liberation from these societal injustices. This leads to many mainstream churches preaching, teaching, and focusing their outreach programming on eradicating social and cultural forms of oppression. The church has been sidetracked by culture and the standards of culture, neglecting the Biblical focus on the

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[3] Donald K. McKim, s.v. "theology," *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 279-280.

[4] Donald K. McKim, s.v. "practical theology," *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 279-280.

[5] Donald K. McKim, s.v. "liberation," *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 160.

oppression of the soul. The Bible's overwhelming theme of liberation concentrates on the liberation of the souls of humankind.

The question I asked myself. How does the church engage culture and still be the place for Biblical Principle to shine as the truth? Many Churches have engaged culture but compromised principle to maintain membership and youth involvement. The result is lackluster spiritual formation and foundation. When these young people encounter adversity, they are more likely to cave under peer pressure and societal influences.

In my mind, the answer is a robust education and learning Biblical principles that lead to a strong spiritual foundation and formation.I chose liberation theology because it closely reflect the work of Jesus on the cross to liberate us from sin. The principles of liberation theology are paramount in addressing both the injustices of culture and the oppression of sin, as they both have an adverse effect on humanity. Cultural influences such as homelessness, lack of economic equity, and lack of educational equity all play a part in oppression in society. Oppression begins with the dehumanization of the oppressed or stripping the personhood of a group of people.

Examples of this systematic dismantling of the humanity of a group can be seen in the colonization of the Native Americans and the treatment of black Africans removed from their native land. Oppression can be seen in the Bible, from the release of the children of Israel from Egypt to all the times the people of God were taken into captivity and then released. The final release of the people of God comes with the Advent of Christ coming and dying on the cross, then being resurrected and returning to the Father, affording the liberation of all people from the oppression of sin.

During political cycles, oppression of the least of these is the agenda for both sides of the aisle. In the systems continuing to support the systems of disparity, racial, economic, and educational inequities, the political machine in the United States of both parties chose a side to make the issue of today. In the twenty-first century, neither side is looking for a solution to the oppression that results from socioeconomic disparity among the people. One side encourages leaving the oppressed in their situation because they refuse to work, yet one of the principles found in the Bible is a directive from Jesus (give to widows and poor because what you have done to the least of these you have done to me Mathew 25:40. The other faction highlights the problem but does not offer solutions to the problem. The twenty-first century sees the uprising of racial unrest that are invoking conflict and discussions about history, education, talk of indoctrination of the young, and accusations of "whitewashing" history leave the average church attendees confused and disenfranchised from the biblical principles and personal relationship with the ultimate liberationist, Jesus. If the church engages in more systematic study of biblical principles and the relationship between culture and Christ, there will be a change in society, and cultural influences will be less prominent.

Academia encompasses multiple voices and criticisms of Liberation Theology. This theological foundation will highlight these voices and their detractors respectively. James Cone, Gustave Gutierrez, and Robert McAfee Brown, to name a few, are voices best known within Liberation theology. The theologians named above will contribute to the formation of the project foundation in their respective areas. The first foundational portion requires listening to the voices of Liberation Theology.

James Cone a prominent voice in liberation theology in the United States. Provide a foundation for this project, in two for his books. *Black liberation theology and God of the Oppressed.* James Cone provides a concise and comprehensive understanding of liberation theology. Then, when the reader continues to understand, Cone interjects the idea of Black Theology and carefully crafted a tapestry of Blackness and Liberation Theology. Cone's formation of black theology draws a clear and direct line to Moses and the children of Israel in the Bible. Cone's well-known book *A Black Theology of Liberation* provides foundations of theology that other writers leave muddy and unclear. After creating a clear line from Israel's liberation from Egypt to the modern-day oppression of Blacks in America, Cone then proceeds to connect the dots from the liberation of Egypt to the work of God through Jesus on the Cross for the liberation of humankind from the oppression of sin found in today's culture. *God Of the Oppressed* gives a working definition of liberation based on the black theologian's viewpoint. James Cone expresses cultural issues in the postmodern world by examining the issues of the twentieth century, which include socioeconomic racism in his time period. This research observed these same issues in the twenty-first century. The issues have not diminished but have become more intense and prominent. Societal concerns have become the "religion" of the church, the relevance of the relationship with Christ, the importance and necessity of a personal relationship, and the freedom it provides have been set aside.

Another prolific theologian in Liberation Theology, Gustavo Gutierrez makes some interesting changes to his work, and he continues to acknowledge that this theology is a living, breathing, and ever-evolving theology. Gutierrez is known as the "Father of liberation theology in the South American world." His theories appear to be the backbone

of liberationism. In *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, Gutierrez states, "Theology is intrinsic to a life of faith seeking to be authentic and complete and is, therefore, essential to the common consideration of this faith in the ecclesial community."[6] Cultural influences such as the advent of the separation between Church (religion) and State (laws of the land) have greatly affected the opportunity to reveal how biblical principles can impact a solution of many of society's ills."[7] Socioeconomic policies in the twenty-first century are systems conceived and contrived to place humans in the categories of oppression.

Robert McAfee Brown draws from an understanding of Gustavo Gutierrez's work in liberation theology in South America, then provides a quilt of ideas to be transferred to the middle class in America. One point of all these theologians about liberation theology is that it is transformative for those who ascribe to its tenets. The transformation of Culture is profound when the people of God embrace the liberating work of Jesus and follow the command of Yahweh, as Moses told the children of Israel. Brown's foray into the issue of Liberation theology focuses on the theme of humanity. When exploring liberation theology, one must first acknowledge that the issue is not about a "concept" of the oppressed, the poor, or those who are being mistreated. The "those" are human beings--people with families, feelings, and aspirations. Many are people who have faith that they follow, yet political, socioeconomic, and power structures hinder them. According to Brown, many within the middle-class classification are working poor and working people of color who are oppressed.

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[6] Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1971), 3.

[7] Brown, *Liberation Theology*, 19.

Understanding that the persons discussed are seeking a solution and rectification for the wrongs applied to them by governments, churches, and people who wish to proliferate their prosperity upon the backs of others with disregard to feelings and the human upon the misery they heap. [8] Brown emphasizes the humanity of the oppressed and then cultivates or connects the biblical foundation and principles of liberation, which are liberation from captivity found in the Old Testament and the freedom from the oppression of sin by the work Jesus did on the cross. Brown's overwhelming themes of liberation are humanity, socioeconomic policies of the culture, religious indifference, and the call for separation of church (religion) and the laws of the land (state) with the confluence of Racial disparity among all in society. In *Liberation Theology: An Introductory Guide*, Brown states, "In beginning an exploration of liberation theology, it was important not to begin with concepts or principles or historical excursion, but to begin with people."[9]

These theologians are not the only individuals who hold a discourse about liberation theology. Dorothee Soelle, in her book *On Earth as in Heaven: A Liberation Spirituality of Sharing,* expresses her understanding of liberation theology from the feminist perspective. While engaging the reader in her point of view, she creates a tapestry of justice and freedom that will encourage partakers to thoughtfully reexamine the traditional understanding of liberation.[10]

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[8] Robert McAfee, Brown, *Liberation Theology: An Introductory Guide* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1993), 23.

[9] Brown, Liberation Theology, 23.

[10] Dorothee Soelle, On Earth as in Heaven: A Liberation Spirituality of Sharing (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993).

Additionally, Oscar Cole-Arnal, in his book *To Set the Captives Free: Liberation Theology in Canada,* examines liberation theology from the history of its inception in South America to its effect on the culture in Canada. In his book, Cole-Arnal calls for liberationists to continue the struggle for freedom in social situations and acknowledge the connection between Christ's work and today's struggle in his social context.[11] An example of this is the taxation of the individuals within the Middle class exorbitantly.[12] Economic oppression, the inability to feed the family, and providing shelter for the family all produce situations of oppression. Non-Caucasian people in America are disproportionately affected by the oppression of people of color in America.[13] In *The Narrative of Liberation,* Patrick Taylor seeks to examine liberation from the perspective of Afro-Caribbean literature and policies. This is not a theological work; however, the text emphasizes a unique perspective on oppression and the lack of freedom for descendants of enslaved people. Sometimes, assimilating the Christian ideas and the native religions was used to rebel against the oppressive experiences. Taylor's work reflects oppression through the eyes of philosophers, mainly Franz Fanon, a classically trained psychologist and advocate for decolonization, who spoke mostly about the colonization of the black and brown people of the world. Much of Taylor's discourse is undergirded by Fanon's study of colonization and its ill effects on "peasant"

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[11] Oscar Cole-Arnal, To Set the Captives Free: Liberation Theology in Canada (Toronto, Ontario: Between the Lines, 1998).

[12] Pan Wang and Ying Wang, "Analysis of the Impact of the New Tax on the Middle Class from the Perspective of Big Data," *Journal of Physics: Conference Series* vol. 1574, no.1 (2020):012098, https://iopscience.iop.org/ article/10.1088/1742-6596/1574/1/012098/pdf.

[13] Wang and Wang, "Analysis of the Impact of the New Tax on the Middle Class from the Perspective of Big Data."

communities. Taylor says, "Liberation is only meaningful as the realization of Freedom in time; this is, as lived universal."[14] All the narrative stories of liberation within his book give a "Perspective on Afro-Caribbean literature, popular culture, and politics" of his time, many of which culture and society are dealing with at present. Leonardo and Clodovis Boff are twin Catholic Priests from South America who collaborated on their work *Introducing Liberation Theology*. Boff and Boff argue that Liberation Theology do not contradict the social teaching of the church; they are not in competition. The Boff Brothers indicate that the Vatican of Paul VI made this abundantly clear. Boff and Boff contend, "It is not our ambition, nor even our mission…to pronounce one word for all or to put forward on a universal solution. It is for the Christian communities to analyze, objectively, the situation in their own countries, try to toss light on it with the light of the unalterable word of the gospel, and discern the opinions and commitments that they need to take in order to bring about social changes"[15]Their theology was that of the Roman Catholic Church. The Boff brothers espoused some key themes of liberation theology: Living and true faith includes the practice of liberation. Faith is the first point of all theologies. Our belief in God and Jesus is rooted and grounded in faith. Faith is where our salvation lies. But faith alone is not enough; believing in the work of Christ on the cross must be coupled with the truth found in the Bible. The living God sides with the oppressed against the pharaohs of the world. The Exodus story is a resounding example of this. God heard his people crying for relief and he sent Moses. When Moses' voice was not enough, God sent the plagues. The Kingdom of God's project in history and

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[14] Patrick Taylor, *The Narrative of Liberation* (Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), 3

[15] Leonardo Boff, and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988), 34.

eternity. The kingdom of God is not just "heaven," a place believers look forward to, but it is also here on earth as we as believers make it. Jesus said to pray like this: "Thy Kingdom come on earth as it is in Heaven."[16] Christians should be working to bring forth the kingdom of God by having the same attitude toward the oppressed as Jesus did. The Church is the sign and symbol of liberation. Engaging with culture yet keeping the principles found in the Bible and following the directives of God will bring about a change in culture and society. Opponents of liberation theology reveal that there are some aspects of Liberation Theology that appear to lean more toward revolution than to the teachings of the scriptures. Paul Enns offers an analytical summary of liberation theology: Liberation theologians give secondary meaning to the ordinary meaning of the Scriptures and [the historical significance of the resurrection, as suggested by] Cone that the resurrection of Christ means the liberation of all people, relating it to physical deliverance from oppression and ignoring the significance of the resurrection for the deliverance from the bondage of sin. (cf. 1 Cor. 15) 1. The matter of man's sinfulness and his need for a spiritual Savior is ignored in liberation theology. Liberation is normally seen as political. Hope for liberation theologians is not based on the biblical concept of eternal life through Jesus Christ, but hope is related to Jurgen Moltmann's view of realizing the future hope in the present through helping to shape the future (often through revolutionary means). For liberation theologians like Gustavo Gutierrez, theology is not the objective revelation of God given in propositional truths (as it has

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[16] Boff and Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, 34.

been historically understood), but theology is in flux, changing, and is related to the changing of society. It is a "Christian coating" of Marxist socialism.

(1) Liberation theology stands in violation of the injunction of Scripture concerning submission to government as outlined in Romans 13.

(2) The interpretive methodology of liberation might seriously be called into question, as in the case of Juan Luis Segundo, who does not begin with an inductive study of the Scriptures (but allows them to speak for themselves) but allows his political ideology to interpret the Scriptures.

(3) It is a false assumption of liberation theology, as Peter Wagner points out, to suggest that people will respond more readily to the gospel if they enjoy a more affluent environment.[18]

The purpose of studying liberation theology and teaching it to all generations is to bring about the kingdom of God on earth and grow well-rounded, spiritually formed disciples. Liberation theology can be compared with the law in the Old Testament. They both can be considered a mirror reflecting the cultural ills of a needy society. Neither the law nor the methodology of Liberation Theology can permanently eradicate the ills that operate in the cultures despite the contexts that appear centuries apart. With a look into the theology of the Mosaic era and examine the Civil Law found in Exodus 21:1-24:18, there are laws that address "relationships and care for neighbors, and treatment of slaves, injury to others, care for the poor, widows, and orphans, property rights, lending money and others."[19] The New Testament and the doctrine of Christ fulfill the law of love as seen in Mosaic Law but not through liberation. The law of love revealed through the teaching of Christ will transform the hearts of humanity and cause humankind to see each

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Paul Enns, The Moody Handbook of Theology (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 598.

Enns, The Moody Handbook of Theology, 50.

other as God sees them. Jesus instructed His disciples to love in the following passages: John 15: 17, “This is my command: Love each other (NIV); Matthew 22:39, Love your neighbor as yourself (NIV).It may seem like an impossible task. The theology of Christ and His substitutionary death for the atonement of sin, which provided redemption for an enslaved person in bondage and became a propitiation satisfying the “righteous demands of a holy God, offering forgiveness for sinners that resulted in justification,” declared believing sinners righteous.

The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, as presented by Enns, confirms the Holy Spirit as the third person in the Godhead and is not subservient but equal and is available to the believer as He indwells believers for power, instruction, guidance, intercedes, convicts and commands all for the perfection of the believer (Matthew 5:2; John 16:3; John 16:8; John 5:21; Acts 8:29). Both Old Testament and New Testament accounts proclaim that sin and cultural influences are forces of bondage to humanity. Liberation is required for both kinds of oppression.

Conclusion

All these voices mentioned in liberation theology weave a tapestry that can be useful in understanding the liberation Christ gives freely to all who believe. The connection between the social and cultural bondage and the bondage of sin is evident, and all should be cognizant of the connection. This research showed the connections, and the project emphasized the relevance of a personal relationship with Jesus. This document endeavored to provide an overview of the foundational platform for the theological foundations. Each section offered unique insight and information for conversations in theology that can be translated into educational lessons in the final

curriculum project model. Understanding liberation theology causes a unique challenge for the average Christian educator in a postmodern Christian world. If I were to construct a theology, I would emphasize ultimate freedom through the complete redemptive salvation of Jesus Christ.

As 2nd Corinthians 5:18 proclaims ... “anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone. A new life has begun”(NLT).

This research engaged multiple voices in liberation theology themes and definitions for praxis. The purpose of the proposed project is to engage culture through the lens of Biblical principles, highlighting the connection and relevance of a relationship with Christ and providing lessons and activities that will stimulate the thinking of the participants and how they engage in cultural activities. Questions such as: Is that movie, television program, or novel pleasing to God? How would God view that material? Is what I am doing treating the “temple of God” respectful? These are all questions to encourage self-reflection with the pleasing of God as the center of the reflection. This will encourage a more robust relationship with God. Encouraging a personal relationship with God and the importance of the same will facilitate a spiritually mature disciple. The practice of Christian education is an appropriate beginning. Proverbs states, “Wisdom is the principal thing; Therefore, get wisdom. And in all your getting get understanding” (Prov. 4:7).

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERDISCIPLINARY FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

This interdisciplinary foundation document will explore the field of education with a concentration on the theories of connectivism and transformative education. Each of these theories will directly impact the project:" Intersection of Christ and Culture: A Model that Engages Spiritual Formation While Examining Biblical Principles and Cultural Influences." The rationale for choosing this field is the fact that Christian education can easily adopt the tools, techniques, and pedagogy use in secular education. This choice can be a means to connect both home and spiritual formation.

For the most part, secular education and Christian education are two sides of the same coin. Christian education began with the Sunday School movement in England. The migration to the New World sparked the need to educate all children, not just those of a certain means. The evolution of the educational system in the United States is extensive and there have been many theories used to educate the people of the New World. Within the last few years, there has been an emphasis on several directions for education and what would be best for the children of this country. Some would like to return to homeschooling, and utilize modern techniques and technology in the new homeschool movement. Still others continue to embrace the public-school model.

Others wish to privatize education, which creates controversy and tension in the choice of best practice. These different points of view have sparked the "choice" narrative. Because of these different models proposed for the secular sector, the church must present a spiritual formation that is relevant to all areas of one's life. The use of connectivism theory of learning will be used to encourage connectivity between the participants, researcher, context, and culture.

Connectivism theory is based on the understanding that learning happens best when the participants have a connection or personal relationship with individuals who have similar goals and interests. With this in mind, this theory will be instrumental in creating a cohesive bond between participants and show the necessity of having a personal relationship with Christ as a source of knowledge and wisdom. This learning will be enhanced using transformational educational theory, which is understood that learning happens with new experiences and new knowledge. The theory proposes that with the acquisition of new knowledge, different perspectives, and diversity of beliefs and practices, one is able to analyze different ideologies as we navigate cultural experiences

The objective of the proposed project is to utilize these theories during the six-week workshop to effect a change in the mindset of the participants and thus cause a change in the trajectory of the individual and, ultimately, the context by encouraging a personal relationship with Christ and the relevance of the influences culture has on the individual's daily lives. Once an individual is given new knowledge, there will be a change in mindset.

Educational Learning Theories

One of the two theories this project will explore is the Connectivism learning theory. The landscape of learning has changed and continues to change with the introduction of technology. The invention of digital assistants has made research easier for all learners. The idea of connectivism is not a new concept, but the definition of terminology has changed. In the past, the idea of connecting with someone or something meant a physical connection. Today, connecting with someone or something can mean a non-physical connection. Connectivism in today's context and culture has no boundaries in terms of proximity. Cohorts can connect from distant locations all over the world and even into outer space. Digital machines can be programmed to communicate with each other as well as machines with humans, all in a matter of minutes and over several time zones.

Why connectivism? According to Western Governors University, Connectivism "promotes group collaboration and discussion, allowing for different viewpoints and perspectives when it comes to decision-making, problem-solving, and making sense of information. Connectivism promotes learning that happens outside of an individual, such as through social media online networks, blogs, and informational databases."[1]

[1] Western Governors University, "Five Educational Learning Theories," Western Governors University, May 30, 2020, https://www.wgu.edu/blog/five-educational-learning-theories2005.html

The theory of connectivism originated with George Siemens and Stephen Downes. Both men published articles on the subject of Connectivism as a learning theory. Siemens' article

"Connectivism: Learning as a Network Creation" was published online in 2004. Downe's article, "An Introduction to Connective Knowledge," was published the following year.[2] Siemens' list, as appeared in Academic Technology Services,

Listed new trends in learning culture. People move into a variety of fields during their lifetime. Formal education is no longer the source of majority learning. Learning now occurs through communities of practice, personal networks, and work-related tasks. Learning is no longer limited to schooling; it is a continuous process. Technology is rewriting our brains by shaping the way that we think. This list reveals how the change in gathering information informs the choice of different sources of information.[3]

These two principles of connectivism will be used in the proposed project: First, "The ability to see connections between fields, ideas, and concepts is a core skill. Decision-making is a learning process. What we know today might change tomorrow. While there is a right answer now, it might be wrong tomorrow due to the constantly changing information climate."[4] Secondly, WGU offers pros to connectivism: " One, it creates collaboration; Secondly, it empowers

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[2] Western Governor's University, "Five Educational Learning Theories," Western Governor's University, May 30, 2020.

[3] George Siemems, "Academic Technology Sciences, 2004, https://philosophy.hkuhk/think critical/cr.php.

[4] Western Governor's University, "Five Educational Learning Theories," Western Governor's University, May 30, 2020.

students and teachers; and Third, it embraces diversity."[5] The objective of the proposed project is to achieve these outcomes by encouraging the principles of connectivism.

Transformative Learning Theory

"Jack Mezirow is the initial architect of what has come to be known in U.S. adult education as transformative learning theory." [6] Within the discourse of emancipatory education, Mezirow is paramount among the voices. Transformation learning occurs both individually and in the community. Experiences of transformational learning are indicated in *The Handbook of Transformative Learning* by Cranton and Taylor. They suggest that "some alter our very being, our beliefs, and our core sense of self--the core theme by which we live and move and define our being. Transformational learning experiences happen more in the context of working for social change in a community."[7] Both these elements of learning are focal points in the context of the proposed project.

Mezirow specifies phases in transformational learning. The spark of learning begins with a disorienting dilemma, an "aha" moment, which is sometimes uncomfortable but necessary

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[5] Western Governor's University, "Five Educational Learning Theories," Western Governor's University, May 30, 2020.

[6] Patricia Cranton and Edward W. Taylor, *The Handbook of Transformative Learning: Theory, Research and Practice* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 23.

[7] Cranton and Taylor, *The Handbook of Transformative Learning,* 22.

when the student encounters information that was not previously considered. Then, in Selfexamination, the student asks questions about the knowledge they have and performs reflective self-evaluation. Next is the critical assessment of assumptions; the individual examines past assumptions and how they may create a biased understanding. The new knowledge acquired from the instructor or members of a newfound network encourages the student to explore new roles and culminates in building self-esteem.[8] These reflective, self-analytical skills are necessary in making thought-provoking decisions that will lead to transformation and alter some selfdestructive behavior among our present culture. These skills will be most valuable to the knowledge employed in the objective of the project. Other interdisciplinary fields, such as psychology, sociology, and social justice, can be incorporated with the implementation of transformative learning.

Psychology

Psychology is a science field that examines the relationship between the brain and the environment. Psychologists study within subfields of the discipline, and these fields can be combined to make a more comprehensive study.[9] Psychological changes help to transform the minds and actions of an individual when transformational learning is applied. Abraham Maslow, a humanistic psychologist whose work is noted in the field of psychology, developed the Hierarchy of Needs while exploring the field of early childhood development. Maslow postulates that the needs found in his pyramid must be

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[8] Cranton and Taylor, *The Handbook of Transformative Learning,* 22.

[9] American Psychology Association, "Science of Psychology," https://www.apa.org/educationcareer/guide/science.

met to ensure healthy and well-rounded individuals. His original structure evolved with further study and has been instrumental in the educational systems in America.

Psychology has several subfields that are studied. The prominent subfields for the purposes of this foundation are social psychology and brain science, cognitive psychology, and educational psychology. Each subfield examines distinct functions of the brain. Cognitive psychology focuses on the brain, how it works, and what it does physically when memories are made and retained. According to Newcomb et al., "Social psychologists are interested in all aspects of personality and social interaction, exploring the influence of interpersonal and group relationships on human behavior. Social psychologists study how social influence, social perception, and social interaction influence individual and group behaviors."[10]

Some social psychologists focus on conducting research on human behavior. Others focus on the practical application of social psychology by helping organizations hire and train employees, evaluating educational programs to determine if intervention strategies are working, searching for ways to encourage people to reduce pollution, or offering advice to businesses or employees who need help with conflict mediation.[11]

Because social psychologists are trained to combine their knowledge of human behavior with scientific research methods, job options, and work settings are diverse. Many social psychologists choose to work in educational environments such as colleges and universities, where they conduct research, teach classes, and run social psychology

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[10] Theodore M. Newcomb, Ralph H. Turner, and Philip E. Converse, eds., *Social Psychology Studies Human Interactions* (New York, NY: U P Psychology Press, 1965), 67.

[11] Newcomb et al., *Social Psychology Studies Human Interactions,* 67.

laboratories.[12] These subfields will be integrated to achieve the maximum positive outcome of the proposed project activities.

Sociology

The science of sociology is the study of society and the interactions between the inhabitants of society and the surrounding physical environment. While Psychology studies the mind and the individual, sociology studies society, community, and its interaction with the individual. By viewing the classroom as a social space, one can envision the themes of interactional dynamics, identity formation, institutional effects, structural inequalities, and knowledge production, as a framework for curriculum and methodology in the classroom and lecture halls.[13] Learning environments have been noted to have either positive effects or negative effects on learning and teaching. The authors of this article strongly recommend that these elements be used to inform education practices and relevant content at appropriate instructional levels.

By using social issues to structure assignments and lessons, instructors can build relevance to a student's world. As the social dynamics toward diversity and global interactions, pedagogy must evolve into a methodology that will give opportunities to develop social and emotional skills that will be effective in the changing social climate. The sociological constructs can be applied to foster spiritual formation that a relevant to a transformation in one's biblical world view.

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[12] Newcomb, Turner, and Converse, eds. *Social Psychology Studies Human Interactions*, 67.

[13] Judith Halasz and Peter Kaufman, "Sociology as Pedagogy: How Ideas from the Discipline Can Inform Teaching and Learning," *Teaching Sociology* 36, no. 4 (October 2008): 301-17.

Social Justice

Changes in social justice begin with a transformation of the mindset of the masses. What is the meaning of justice? "Social justice reflects a fundamental valuing of fairness and equity in resources, rights, and treatment for marginalized individuals and groups of people who do not share equal power in society because of their immigration, racial, ethnic, age, socioeconomic, religious heritage, physical ability, or sexual orientation status groups."[14]

Examining social justice issues requires a close examination of cultural norms. Individual values, religious beliefs, and social status all affect the means and methods of developing social justice in our community, both religious and secular. As our world becomes more diverse and plural cultures share communities, one must develop a mindset of inclusion and acceptance of diversity of thought and preferences.

All these aspects of transformation are examples of emancipation, learning, or freedom from a mindset that keeps one oppressed and bound to what is perceived to be a negative circumstance. Constantine et al. argue,

It is imperative that educational, psychological, and other theories develop methodological and pedagogical norms as more ideologies, concepts, precepts, and "truth" are introduced in our culture. It becomes more imperative that our society have a mechanism for decision-making. If one adheres to the principle that learning rests in diversity of opinion, one must be able to determine which opinion is acceptable in one's

[14] Madonna G. Constantine, Sally M. Hage, Mai M. Kindaichi, and Rhonda Bryant, "Social Justice and Multicultural Issues: Implications for the Practice and Training of Counselors and Counseling Psychologists," *Journal of Counseling & Development* 85, no. 1 (Winter 2007): 24-29.

context. If one accepts the premise that learning is a process of connecting, and it is imperative that one must nurture and maintain the connection for continual learning, then one must be able to judge how one will be connected. If one is to adhere to the principle that accurate, up-to-date knowledge is the aim of all learning, then a method of determining accuracy must be established. If decision-making is a learning process, then there must be standards and a basis for making a decision. If one adopts the principles proposed in Siemens' and Dowen's research (connectivism), education must prepare a population for the task as cultures change. One concept is critical thinking.

There are many definitions that are quite compatible with the theories that are presented above. The application presented above shows the skills of a critical thinker. Being able to analyze situations and circumstances allows one to understand logical connections between ideas, evaluate arguments, detect inconsistencies and common mistakes in reasoning, solve problems systematically, identify the relevance and importance of ideas, and reflect on the justification of one's own beliefs and values. The above skills and competencies will equip participants involved in the proposed project to recognize the influences of the changing culture and be prepared to resist the distractions and hindrances that are indicated in the context problem.

The use of secular educations praxis in Christian educational settings can be used in the creation of a model for spiritual formation. As previously stated, there are several theories of learning in the secular education realm, there are voices attached to these theories. Jean Piaget studied psychology and cognitive learning theory, Maslow's Hierarchy of needs and humanism learning theory, Albert Bandura gave us four elements of leaning in social learning theory. These four elements consist of 1. (Attention),2,

(retention), 3 (reproduction) and 4. (Motivation).[15] David Kolb was inspired by Dewey, Lewin and Piaget while examining experimental theory of learning. He gave us four stages of learning 1 concrete learning 2 reflective observation 3 focus on grasping an experience and 4 conceptualization and experimental learning. [16] We as the church and Christian educators must employ and understand the theories set forth to identify ways in which to reach individuals. These theories and practices can be used across generational lines and help to craft lesson, activities and promote the major agenda of Christian educators to make disciples for Jesus. The methods of secular education can be used in formation of Curricula, programs, and activities but the message of biblical principles and a God centered live must be made clear to the learner. Proper interpretation of scripture for today's context is paramount to learning and accepting the gift of salvation. "Charles R. Foster outlines a guide for revisioning local church education the tasks include building communities of faith in and through which discipleship to Jesus Christ is nurtured. Building communities of faith capable of helping make religious sense of their encounters between their traditions of faith and the exploration of new knowledge that surrounds them… and the decisions they must make for living in to a changing world. Building communities of faith capable of nurturing hope vital enough to invite people into the human vocation of praising God and serving neighbor for the sake of the

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[15] Western Governors University. "Five Educational Learning Theories," Western Governors University, May 30, 2020, https://www.wgu.edu/blog/five-educational-learning-theories2005.html

[16] Western Governors University. "Five Educational Learning Theories," Western Governors University, May 30, 2020, https://www.wgu.edu/blog/five-educational-learning-theories2005.html

transformation of the world. "[17] The Community of faith Foster is speaking of is the Church, and as the Church we must be intentional about building congregations that are vital, explore new knowledge and make sese of their encounter all while making disciples for Christ.

Christian youth ministry cannot be solely dependent on learning theories and bible stories from an ancient society to engage today's generation. Because cultural and community norms are changing rapidly and a proliferation of knowledge from varying ideologies, the church must be intentional and committed to keeping biblical principles the message of the youth ministry, as well as all missional efforts. The teaching must include teaching for meaning and relevance for all generations. Teachers must lead students to examine the context of biblical stories and reflect

on how they relate to their realities. Teachers must lead them to understand that scripture is written for all time and all people. When students can see themselves in a biblical encounter they can acknowledge the relevance of that biblical precept. When teaching for meaning has accored the student can recognize the connectiveness and the irreconcilable differences in concepts or behavior. This occurrence is a powerful tool for dicision making in times of advises cultural influences. As meaning is revealed to stundents it can have a transforming effect on their lives. [18]

Understanding biblical principle is imperative if student are to use them for transforming their lives. However, students want to see examples of the transformation

[17] Foster, Charles R. "Educating Congregations; The Future of Christian Education, Nashville, Abington Press 1994

[18] Robert Brown "Is faith obsolete as sited in "Educating Congregations"

exhibited in today's culture. What better place to be reviled than in a Christian venue; Church, or in a school setting lead by a Christian teacher. Some former church goers have despaired organized religious fellowship because the felt unwanted and un fulfilled with he information and instruction. But other have left because of the environment and the culture of the fellowship. The youth ministry must have an environment that shows God's love in teacher interaction with students. Teachers must create a culture of respect and trust for teacher and students alike. Students must feel like they cand make a unique contribution to the class. Class culture and environment must foster open communication encouraging students to express their thoughts, doubts and questions openly. Difficult subjects such as cultural issues and different points of view must be addressed honestly without bias and judgment. Classrooms that have an environment of compassion, respect, encouragement and love deepens faith and discipleship that ultimately leads to transformation and a commitment to share the source of their change.

The Church must recognize the power of plurality, and plan for the use of biblical principles to be present at the table of instruction.

Contextual Problem

The contextual problem is that participants do not see the relevance of a personal relationship with Christ and how culture influences their daily lives. The introduction of new information with a concentration on the intersection between biblical principles and the social norms of today will provide a platform for transformative learning. This learning theory will influence their understanding of the unperceived culture that influences their daily lives. By giving the participants, the tools to critically analyze the

cultural distractors invading their minds on a regular basis, the participants will seek the counsel of the Bible more readily and frequently, thus strengthening their relationship with God. A strengthened relationship will facilitate a more cohesive and stronger spiritual foundation. This foundation will, in turn, spark a change in mindset and behavior and thus the community of the context and community of society at large.

Biblical Interaction

The Connectivism and Transformative theories interact with the biblical foundation by sparking the participants to use critical thinking when reading the Bible and asking questions like, "What does God say about a particular subject?" "How can I follow the directions given in a particular passage?" "How can I better conform to the directives?" After contemplating these questions, the participants are given added information and new experiences to incorporate into their daily lives. The objective of the project is to transform the thinking of the participants and, thus, the community of the context.

Integrating the Biblical foundation, Deuteronomy 6: 1-14, is the basis for the proposed project. Understanding the theme of this pericope, is the foundation of the proposed project. God's sovereignty, the directive to remember the past and the provisions of God for the people, and teaching the next generation allow participants to understand the reasons for the reverence of the sovereign God. Finally, the directives give them a blueprint for living in the culture they will encounter. Within the pericope, Moses gives directives to teach every generation of these principles, keeping them at the forefront of their lives. This directive is applicable to today's society, and reminding the participants will spark conversations and interactions with culture in a more mindful way.

Historical Interaction

According to Western Governors University, connectivism and transformative theories interact with the historical foundation. Historically, research began in the library with the card catalog and periodical index. Today, the researcher begins with the words "Hey," Google, Alexa, and Siri--searching for something only requires asking the digital assistant for the answer.

Connection to historical events and synthesizing the intersections between those events and present-day situations only requires thought and putting it on paper.

The historical foundation of this document journeys back to England, where a man in the English countryside observes the undisciplined youth and analyzes the reasons the youth were without supervision. The parents were in destitute situations because of incarceration and abject poverty. His answer to the problem was to provide education using the Bible as the textbook, introduce moral laws, and employ disciplinarians to require order in Sunday School. Robert Raikes' model of education migrated to the new world.

The Sunday School movement was instrumental in changing the landscape of the new world. The Industrial Revolution was encouraged by the educated in the New World. As people learned, their imagination sparked, and devices were created. Thus, the Industrial Revolution. This is not the end of the evolution of education. The Sunday School Movement sparked another educational endeavor. The education of the masses began to be the focus of educators in the new world. The changes in educational level change the trajectory of the individual. Statistics note that high school graduates are more productive than non-graduates, and College graduates make more money than noncollege

graduates. The need for educational institutions begins with the youngest individuals. Teaching reading, writing, and mathematics gives a foundation for a better livelihood. This is the foundation for more equitable socioeconomic outcomes. The introduction of educational institutions for the masses in the new world is the basis of secular education and is the focus of this foundation document. Its interdisciplinary focus looks not only at the history of education but also at the integration of education with the proposed project. The use of secular pedagogy in education will be used in the project implementation.

Theological Interaction

The theme of liberation theology is basically freedom. Incorporating the principles of liberation theology in the foundations of the proposed project requires an in-depth examination of who is oppressed and what oppression comprises. Oppression of different people groups includes race, sex, age, and sexual orientation. Each of these people groups has unique characteristics that are targeted for bigotry, oppression, and malicious intent. Liberation theology addresses the characteristics and highlights the similarities of the group rather than the differences. This targeted effort to show similarities gives way to transformation in mindset and behavior. Liberation theology introduces the concept of being free, freedom from the penalty of sin provided by Christ, freedom from socioeconomic situations, geopolitical constructs, and all having a place in education. The center of liberation theology is God and his creation (man). God created humankind as a living soul and good in his image. Liberation theology expresses the humanization of all and is an important part of the principles of liberation. Education provides freedom from the lack of knowledge of laws and constructs that promote

oppression in society. These constructs can be dismantled by education in schools, seminars, and planning sessions when constructing housing, as well as other economic vehicles for uplifting the oppressed. The incorporation of theological principles found in liberation theology will be used to emphasize the freedom afforded by education within the proposed project.

Conclusion and Reflection

The acquisition of new knowledge and new perspectives causes changes in mindset, values, and perceptions. All these changes lead to an evolution of thought that leads to a change in behavior and actions, thus changing the overall culture. Education as an interdisciplinary field of study encourages this acquisition. While studying the history and implementation of education in the United States, this researcher has found multiple facets of discipline. The theories explored are connectivism and transformational learning. Each of these theories does not work independently. They work congruently and provide a well-rounded understanding of education. The participants of this workshop will benefit from the principles of these theories in praxis. The theory of transformational learning is specifically geared towards adult learning. The target demographic is adult learners, and this theory is appropriate to begin the desired change in mindsets and behaviors. The generalized desired outcome of the workshop is a change in the mindset of the participants, thus affecting a cognitive change of behavior and, ultimately, a change in culture.

Transformative and connectivism as learning theories will be used to facilitate the desired outcomes of the proposed project. The incorporation of these theoretical

constructs will require an amalgamation of both theories and the theological, historical, and biblical foundation in this document. Historically, education has been derived from the Sunday School movement upon the birth of the nation.

Generally, mass education requires a consensus of individuals with the same beliefs, morals, and understanding of education. It requires self-examination and changes in beliefs, morals, and behaviors, which will facilitate adjustments in behaviors that lead to changes in decision-making and, ultimately, society. Biblical foundations of education can be found in the pericope Moses's instructions to the children of Israel, which are to not only keep the commands of God but also teach all generations, which is paramount. The theme of Liberation theology puts the topping on the cake of foundations, with the concept of liberating the masses from the oppression of sin being the main purpose of the project. This researcher notes that there is always an absolute truth and right and wrong found in biblical principles from God. The desired outcome of the proposed project is to facilitate the renewed engagement in organized Christian church attendance and the relevance of a personal relationship with Jesus, the Christ.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Introduction

I began my research and study as a novice, an inexperienced minister. God placed in my heart a love for children and all things youth ministry. My spiritual formation journey began with being a member of a Pentecostal church with congregations in Africa, Haiti, the Philippines, and Barbados. My home church is The United Holy Church of America, specifically, the Northern

District. As a youth, I traveled to conventions and convocations and learned about Jesus and God through classes, and entertainment directed by adults in my life. My parents and grandparents modeled the Christian life for me. Daily bible reading and prayer were mandatory in my home, as well as corporate worship on Sunday mornings, evenings, and nights. Weekly bible study and choir rehearsal were always on the agenda. Though I was engaging in activities that formed my spiritual life, I did not understand what I now believe is a fundamental portion of my Christian Walk. My relationship with Christ did not come until much later in my life. Yes, I knew about Christ, but did I know him as a personal God? That was the question I began to ask myself during this second act of my life. When I was called to the ministry, I resisted, feeling unworthy and unqualified, so I went to seminary because academia challenges the teaching of your youth. After receiving my Master of Divinity with a concentration in Christian Education

and Pastoral counseling, I felt the pull to continue my education and work on the Doctor of Ministry degree. Thus, my second act in ministry.

The focus of my project is to develop a Model for spiritual formation that emphasizes the personal relationship with God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit and leads young Christians to a more biblical worldview across the generational spectrum. Research reveals that youth are abandoning the church organization at a younger age than the previous generation. The problem in the context of Bethel United Holy Church of Trenton New Jersy is the moving away of young people due to cultural influences and a lack of understanding of the need and relevance of a personal relationship with God.

"The Intersection of Christ and Culture: A Model for Spiritual Formation examines Biblical Principles and Cultural Influences" *and* takes an in-depth look at the cultural influences of the day. It reveals how Christ's earthly purpose is transformative when His power from God and his obedience to God the Father are emphasized in cultural endeavors. When there is a comprehensive understanding of who God is and His desire for humanity, God's human creation will see the need for a personal relationship with God, the Creator. Living in the will of God makes for a happier and healthier life. My hypothesis is that if the participants in the study are engaged in a comprehensive biblically based study, they will have a more biblically based worldview.

My Biblical foundation is based on Deuteronomy 6: 1-14. In these verses, we find Moses issuing the commandment of God to the second generation of Israelites after the Exodus from captivity in Egypt. Forty years after the Exodus and wandering in the wilderness for forty years, these Israelites only had a cursory understanding of the significance of having a personal relationship with the God of their fathers. The second

issuance of the commands was to serve as a reminder of the provisions God had afforded them and the life and reverence the children should have for the creator of the world. These children retained the rituals without understanding the meaning of those rituals. The second issuance of the commands added considerable substance to the rituals and festivals they celebrate to give a more rounded and comprehensive knowledge of Who God is and how important it is to have a relationship with him.

These directives would also serve as instructions on how the children of Israel should conduct their daily living in the land in which they would occupy. Specifically, to be separated from the culture they would encounter. This pericope gives us an example of how the church and Christians should live in today's world. We are living in the world, but we are not of this world and should not take upon ourselves the ways of this world. In other words, we should be influencing culture, not culture influencing us. The biblical foundation is only one of the four foundations of this project. The conjunction of Biblical foundation and historical foundation can be found in examining the pericope in a historical context and understanding the history of Christian education. The foundation of Christian or religious education began with a movement that was not Christian or religious in nature.

The historical foundation of the Sunday school movement highlights the diversity found in educational circles and how Christian education, as well as secular education, was birthed in the new world. Throughout the research of the Sunday School Movement, I found the transformation of the subject matter, which was dictated by the cultural changes in the new world from the creation of a new republic, the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the Emancipation of slaves, Reconstruction, Jim Crow

laws, Brown v. the Board of Education to the present move toward the new home-schooling movement. All these factors affect the education and Christian education in the United States.

Theological foundations are necessary for this model because spiritual formation begins with scriptural references like the biblical foundation of Deuteronomy 6: 1-14. I chose liberation theology for this foundation because the theme of liberation is freedom from bondage, oppression, and suppression of a people group. I began with a look at Cone's Black Theology and his weaving of the Biblical scripture and the cultural influences of today. The purpose of liberation is to examine liberation not just from the human perspective, injustice in the world of human slavery and oppression of a group of people, but the liberation from the bondage of sin in the lives of all people through the belief and trust in the work of Jesus on the cross, his death resurrection and ascension is the beginning of a new life and existence for all who believe.

Experiencing the rapid change of culture and its influences, I noted that secular humanism in the post-pandemic and post-modern world has collided, causing morally questionable choices to be available to young people. They are choosing to follow the way of culture and not the way of God set forth in the Bible. My project, Intersection of Christ and Culture: A Model for Spiritual Formation that examines Biblical Principles and Cultural influence, is designed to emphasize the necessity of a personal relationship with Christ and a Theological basis for the rejection of cultural influences that contradict the teaching in the Bible.

The interdisciplinary foundation of education is used to provide praxis and pedagogies for the development of lesson plans and lessons. I used several different

theories to prepare the lessons implemented in the six-week labs. Connectivism is used to provide a connection between the participants and the culture in which we live. The use of transformational learning is integrated with connectivism to facilitate a transformational mindset and transformation within culture. The use of education as the interdisciplinary foundation for this project provided me, as the facilitator, with a concrete starting point for developing a lesson that is informational and interesting to my audience. My understanding of the different theories gives me purpose for each lesson. Connecting the participants with the subject matter and each other, as well as the culture or society, provides a clear and concrete basis for each lesson. Transformational thinking happens when there is a clear direction for the lesson. Steps 1 and 2 are connected; thus, a transformation happens in the participant and the culture. Exploring the societal norms provides a context for which these changes can be seen and directed.

Methodology

My desire for this project is to be the foundation for a Christian education ministry in this context. I chose spiritual formation as the point of origin because the problem in the context stems from the lack of understanding and relevance of the necessity of a personal relationship with Christ by young Christians of every generation. The mass exodus from the organized church is evident in the youth of younger ages in generation than in previous generations.

There were major challenges in executing this project, but God gave me perseverance and fortitude to complete the assignment. I experienced three falls that resulted in a broken femurs three times, four hospital stays, and one during the six-week exercise—continued health challenges that required the project to be held in a cyber

environment. My project implementation was envisioned as an open group discussion with robust conversation, but it ended up being more in the format of a bible study and lecture.

Pre-survey questionnaires were used to evaluate the understanding of the subject matter. Spiritual formation, the mass exodus from church involvement, and the mindset in regard to cultural influences were the major focus. Post-survey questionaries were used to evaluate the transformational elements of the participants' lives after participation. Journaling was used to provide a space for participants to reflect and take notes during and after each session. The journal was also used to document questions to be asked in the next session for clarification of the subject matter.

Each session was designed to build and hinge on the previous week's session. I used the title of the project as the guide for the subject matter and the theme of each session. Spiritual formation was used as the anchor of the workshops. Using Spiritual formation as the anchor gives stability and a foundation to the subsequent sessions. The course continued with the examination of culture, influences, and personal responsibility in the spiritual lives of the participants. I attempted to alert the participants to the pitfalls of a culture that is not biblically sound. Such as giving information and examples of the instruments of Satan in a culture that confuses Christians today about Satan's plan will sensitize the participants. The sessions emphasized that Satan's tools and tricks have not changed since the Garden of Eden. The workshops continued with an examination of Biblical principles found in the chosen pericope as well as those in Exodus chapter twenty and how those principles relate to today's society. The participants are made aware that though the Ten Commandments are from the Old Testament and are a part of

the old covenant, the commandments are also included and part of the new covenant, moral law. Participants are given other tools found in the scriptures to battle the tricks and pitfalls of the enemy.

Implementation

Like my context, my participant pool was small. In the first week, I had two participants; they were excited to participate, and much of the discussion was in response to information that was not new to them. By the third week, participation increased, with two more participants logging into the sessions. There were five participants, including the context associate. Each participant was issued an alphanumeric indicator to be used as their name during the sessions. The purpose is to promote anonymity and a level of confidentiality. One participant chose not to use the indicator, which I suspect decreased the comfort level of the other participants. The discussions were more of a question-answer session than lively interaction. Each session began with a prayer of thanksgiving, understanding, and discernment. Likewise, each session ended with a prayer of thanksgiving and covering during the week.

Lesson One: Spiritual Formation

I began with an overview of Spiritual formation. Defining the terminology given by John M. Dettoni In "The Christian Educator's Handbook of Spiritual Formation" In this resource, I discovered three keywords that highlight 'the foundation of spiritual formation. 1) formation, (2) discipline, and (3) Maturity. [1]According to Dettoni, the root

[1] John Dettoni, "Psychology of Adulthood," in The Christian Handbook on Adult Education: Professionals from Across the Evangelical Spectrum Survey and Evaluate the State of Adult Education in the Church Today, eds. Kenneth Gangel and James Wilhoit (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1993), 77-90.

of formation, is derived from morphe, where we get metamorphosis or change. The central idea of formation is the change from one mindset to another. Galatians 4:19 Paul's letter to Galatia shows his desire to change the behavior of the church there. Dettoni states, "Formation requires knowledge of specific data as well as integrating those data within the larger whole of one's life. "[2]

The second word is disciple. What is a disciple? My definition is one who follows Christ's ways, not just the miracles He performed. However, "culture" is pushing that we have the powers of Christ to heal the sick by laying on of hands and with our faith, but there is a caveat to that ability. Christ had a discipline of seeking the Father's will prior to performing any miracle. He prayed. He offered thanksgiving and praise to the Father. Jesus also spent time in communion with the Father, meditation, and listening to the will of the Father. In this respect, disciples of Christ should also spend in communion with the Father by praying daily and reading his word daily. An example in the Bible is the story of the disciples attempting to cast out the demon, and Jesus said that only these things can be done with faith (Matthew 17:14-20). This suggests that if your relationship with the power source is not strong, you will not have the gift of healing and casting out demons. Another example is after Jesus' ascension, and when Peter heals the cripple beggar at the gate called Beautiful (Acts 3:1-10). It was after Peter had mastered the discipline to pray and seek God for his will that Peter was able to perform this miracle.

The use of discipline through prayer, meditation, and reading of God's word strengthens the faith and relationship we have with God. Many call these disciplines spending time in God's presence. When we embark on this journey of discipleship, there

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[2] Dettoni, "Psychology of Adulthood," 77-90.

is a transformation and formation of our spiritual life and a more mature relationship with God. This is only one scholar's definition of spiritual formation, and I will be drawing from this definition throughout the sessions. We Must speak about God in his totality. There are three aspects of God: God is the creator of all things, God is the man in the person of Jesus who walked on the earth and experienced all the things that we experience, and God the Holy Spirit, the sustainer and comforter, who Jesus spoke about. The trinity is what we call him. In Genesis 1:1, we meet God the Father, the creator who spoke all things into existence.

Lesson Two: Cultural Influences

What are cultural influences? Webster's dictionary defines culture as "the customary beliefs, social forms and material traits of a racial, religious or social group." If we take this definition, we look at the world and the environment in which we live. If we look back at our guiding text. Deuteronomy 6:1-14 Moses gave specific directions to the children of Isreal not to take on the characteristics of the people who were living in the promised land. God directed his people to love Him and worship Him and Him alone. God also gave directions on how to live in the promised land. Not only to worship but to write his precepts on the doorposts and gates. To wear them on their foreheads and arms; teach their children continuously. By being an example and showing them the way to live Holy, so they are not tempted to follow the culture.

"There are four common definitions for culture)1common culture is the spirit of the age, the world we are immersed in. This culture is transcendent, and it is accepted as the norm.)2 Pop culture Holds the attention of the populace. This culture is temporary and faddish, trendy, and fickle. This culture might be shallow, but it is not insignificant. This

is the culture that changes on a whim and is the basis of youth interest. 3) High culture is a culture that is characterized by high society activities, such as the Opera, theater, and ballet. 4) Theological definition is characterized by how humankind responds to God's creations."[3]As Christians, we ask ourselves, How do cultural influences affect our worldview?

We make a better culture through our interaction with culture and using a biblical lens to influence culture as Christians. Engaging culture today can include evangelism, vocation and promoting human flourishing. Our most effective engagement is participation in faith-based activities. This can be used to be an examples to young Christians and youth.

Who influences culture?

- Madison Avenue (i.e., commercials, podcasts)
- The people engaged in cultural activities (i.e., social media)
- Christians with a Biblical worldview
- Satan

Characteristics of Satan

- Enemy's Agenda?
- To confuse and confound people (God's creation)
- He roams around like a roaring lion roaming around, seeing who he can devour, He Comes to steal, kill, and destroy.

We asked the question, Have Satan's tactics changed? Are his tactics more easily identified? What was illuminated by the discussion this evening? Please reflect on and document this in your journal. Madison Avenue perpetuates the idea that there is not one truth, but the truth is relative. God also gives a warning that if they fail to obey, God will destroy them. I asked participants to answer the following questions in journal entries.

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[3] Ken Keathley, "Everyone Assumes They Know What Culture Is. What Is It Really,? Center for Faith and Culture, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, September 28, 2020, https://cfc.sebts.edu/faith-andculture/what-is-culture-4-common-definitions/

After Participating in the exercise last week, What do you think God's response to your participation would be? After participating in the discussion about culture and noting the cultural events you participated in this past week, what was illuminated by the discussion this evening, document it in the journal provided. In preparation for next week's lesson, I asked the following questions for reflection and contemplation. What are the characteristics of God? What is the agenda of the enemy?

Lesson Three: Sin and the Fall of Humanity

Our guiding text in Deuteronomy by the historical record, we know the land of promise was inhabited by pagan worshippers—people who had a go for everything and purpose. The culture of the people already living in the Promise Land was that of sacrifice to their gods, making images, and bowing down to them, and in many ways, it resembles culture today; anything goes, and the truth is relative. God's directive was to not engage in that culture but to live Holy and separate from that culture. The purpose of living separately, writing the precept on the doorpost and gates, and wearing them on the forehead and arms is a reminder of God's goodness and his great love for humankind. Teaching and talking about God to all generations will perpetuate the love and obedience to a Holy and righteous God and will give power to all generations to be an example of Holy and righteous living.

When we speak of sin and the fallen nature of man, we must also speak of Satan, Lucifer, the devil. Participants discussed the characteristics of Satan by describing the three names by which he is known. The serpent in the Garden of Eden lied and misrepresented God, confused and manipulated Adam and Eve into disobedience, thus, the fall of humanity. The evidence of this fall is present today in the examples listed here.

1. A rise in Paganism [witchcraft, satanic worship]
2. A rise in polytheism [multiple gods]
3. A rise in agnosticism [do not know if there is a god]

Note some do not know they are worshipping Satan because their eyes are closed to his ways and tactics. Satan attacks the mind.

Lucifer, the name the enemy had in heaven before he became full of pride and was kicked out of heaven. He is described as the angel of light and his body was adorned with instruments of worship. His desire to be worshiped and be above God caused his fall from heaven. Today, music and worship of false gods are prevalent in the form of multiple religions that worship multiple gods. The belief that there is more than one way to heaven is all deception of Lucifer to again confuse and manipulate humankind.

The most common name for the enemy is the devil, a cultural depiction of the devil and a man in a red suit with a pitchfork and horns; this image gives rise to another deception of Satan that he is harmless and easily defeated. Children's cartoons poke fun at and dismiss the seriousness of who the devil is and how he can enter your life and cause chaos. In the word of God, we see David in Psalms, John in Revelation, and Paul in the Epistles warn the church and children of God to be aware of his tricks and traps. Paul's Epistles, most notably Ephesians 6, provides directives and precepts for discerning and defeating the enemy. Ephesians 6:11-13 tells us to put on the whole armor of God, Speak the word of God, and remember and memorize promises from the Bible. In this way, we find ourselves closer to the person of God. The question of the week is whether we see similarities in today's culture and the culture from the time of Moses' second issuance of the commandments.

Lesson Four: Biblical Principles and Culture

Question for the Week:

What happens at the intersection between Biblical Principles and Culture? Answer: (discussion) At this point in the session, we examined Biblical principles. Biblical principles are principles found in the Bible. I took my cue from God's commandments. The first ten are found in Exodus 20:1-17 after the deliverance from Egypt. The second issuance is found in Deuteronomy 6:1-14 after the forty years of wandering in the wilderness, our foundational text. This discipline encourages spiritual formation and can be a solid foundation for a personal relationship with God through Jesus and his work on the cross. What are Bible precepts and principles?

Question for the Week:

What is the intersection of Biblical Principles and Culture? Answer: A change of mindset and worldview. Discuss the evidence. The first seven commandments show adoration, love, and reverence for God. If you keep the first seven commandments, the rest are easily kept. Example: If you love God and have no other god before him, coveting your neighbor's wife\husband and property (would be idols to you), and you would have no desire to make an idol. If you love God with all your heart, soul, and mind, the thought of stealing (taking what does not belong to you) is repugnant. The thought of murder is repugnant to you. If you do use God's name in vain as a swear word . misuse of God/ Jesus in any other way that reverence and honor is a misuse of His name. Bearing false witness saying bad things about someone destroying one's reputation is abhorred when you reverence God's name and love our neighbor. Honoring your Father and mother becomes easy because you honor God your Father in heaven. Keeping

the Sabbath Holy is easy because God commands believers to reverence him. On the seventh day, He rested in Genesis. As followers of Christ, we must take the word of God, hide it in our hearts, and meditate on it day and night. Our interaction with culture can and will influence culture. What happens when Christ meets culture?

- The formation of Christians, or a body of believers
- The formation of the church as a body of believers who engage in corporate worship.
- Closer walk within God's will.
- A change happens.
- Positive Acceptance of Jesus' work on the Cross and Resurrection
- Negative Rejection of Christ and God's gift of Salvation

What does God seek for his creation? After acceptance, how does a Christian cultivate a personal relationship with Jesus/God? We Go back to Spiritual formation as our foundation to cultivate a relationship with God. What is in your toolbox to deter the enemy?

Daily Affirmations

Ephesians 6:11-17 (Put on the Whole Armor of God)

Gird loins with truth, a Belt of truth around your waist. (Sometimes, the enemy lies, but it sounds like truth God's truth defeats the lies). The Breastplate of righteousness (protects the heart, the seat of your emotions), Feet shod with the gospel of peace (encourages you to tell others about the work of Jesus on the cross and resurrection for our sins). Shield of faith (our faith and knowledge that despite all the enemy does, we will win in the end). The Helmet of salvation (Satan wants us to doubt God; he attacks our minds, and the knowledge that God has saved us and our meditation on the things of God keep us from listening to Satan's lies). Sword of the Spirit (The Bible is the word of

God. Knowing bible verses and repeating them with the enemy attacks like Jesus did in the wilderness when tempted. This sword is our weapon of choice in our spiritual warfare). Ephesians 5:19

Speak to yourself in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord. This reminds us to keep our minds on God and His goodness. Philippians 4:6

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving present your requests to God. This reminds us to trust God for everything in our lives. I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me Philippians 4:13

How does this verse affirm your faith? Beautifully and wonderfully made in the image of God. Psalms 129:

This Psalm reminds us that God did not make a mistake when he created us. We are perfect in His eyes. And the devil's manipulation of culture is a lie. How does this verse evoke positive affirmation? Group discussion: What are some of your daily affirmations? Do they lift your

spirit?

Daily Prayer

The model prayer in Mathew 6:9:13: Our Father Who art in Heaven

Lesson Five: Pedagogy

Now that we have discussed the spiritual part of the sessions (the most important part), participants learn about the pedagogical parts of the lesson. Secular education is my foundation for this project as well. In my foundational document, you will find

discussions on learning and the different types of learning styles. Those who are educators will know and understand the terms used, such as praxis and pedagogy.

Learning styles are about how a student absorbs or assimilates information. Some are tactile learners, meaning they need a touch point to understand the material. One- two- and threeyear-olds must touch an item and often put it directly into their mouths to understand the world around them. A five- and six-year-old only needs to touch it to understand that that is a block. In addition, the teacher adds a word associated with the item to form language skills by saying the word block, pointing to the block, and spelling the word. All these skills are integrated into learning styles for children; however, adults also have multiple learning styles. Some, like the five-year-old, need a visual queue to understand a concept. A picture is a drawing of an object to understand a concept.

Some are kinetic learners. Have you ever been in a class where someone in the class is tapping their pen or pencil to a beat? Yes, it can be annoying, but that person is absorbing the information in a way that you are not. Kinetic learners tap on the table or tap their feet. Educators need to be aware of the different styles of learning for their students. For example, I had a student in my bible study class who was tapping a beat that I recognized, and it was disrupting my thought patterns. I asked her why she was tapping, but she could not give me an answer, so I asked her to stop. She stopped, but she did not get anything out of the lesson afterward. Later, I learned that she was a kinetic learner, and I allowed her to tap her feet as opposed to tapping on the table.

You have students who take notes and write down questions but never ask questions in class. Sometimes, the notes are concise and easily understood, yet others are disorganized. As the teacher, one must wonder what class that student was in.

Understanding the way a student assimilates information is important for the learning process.

1. Learning styles inform the teacher how to teach a lesson. Sometimes, you have taught a lesson in two or three ways to get the student to understand and assimilate the information.
2. Learning styles give the student a chance to assimilate the information better.

There are two educational theories I would like to discuss this evening.

1. Connectivism theory learning happens through connectivity.
2. The transformative theory proposes that learning happens when information is assimilated and causes a transformation in the participants' behavior, perspective, and understanding.

Development of Christion Education Ministry in Context

The seeking of God for his vision is the most important need in the church today. This ensures that any ministry proposed is within God's will and follows his precepts and principles. Understanding cultural influences on individuals in and out of the church highlights the need for specified education for specific age groups. Education is an ongoing process that does not end with academia and a doctorate degree; education and learning should be a process that takes on one's whole life. The development of purpose is to analyze the reasons for having a strong and continuing growth in spiritual foundation. Finally, our vision statement should align with biblical principles and be a continually relevant biblical instruction in this changing cultural environment.

Lesson Six: Overall Review of Model

Definitions:

- cultural influences
- Spiritual formation
- Biblical principles
- How are the devils' names indicative of his character?

  Lucifer
  Satan
  The Devil
  The evil one

Culture is Satan's context. His tools have been the same since the beginning.

- Deception
- Doubt
- Procrastination
- Twisting of the truth
- lies
- manipulation

Christians have a toolbox as well. The whole armor of God is found in the book of Ephesians.

Daily Affirmations

Prayer, reading the Bible daily, and spending time in God's presence. Question: When do we have time to do all this?

Engage resources, for example, daily bread, The app, the book,

Listen to the Bible in the car.

Encourage corporate worship weekly.

Having something for young believers to participate in during corporate worship

Teaching those under our leadership to reverence and worship God.

Teach all generations the importance of a personal relationship with God through the acceptance of the work of Jesus in the world. [birth, death, resurrection, and return]

Teach discipleship and disciplines of the faith

Emphasis is on the Biblical principles found in the Ten Commandments, most importantly the first seven pertaining to God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. There are educational models and styles of learning in secular education. These theories are not mutually exclusive. They work in tandem.

Connectivism learning begins when there is a connection between the subject matter, teacher, and student—connections between student and student with the world around them to create a bond.

Transformative learning happens when there is a connection between the student and the relevance of the subject matter; thus, a transformation of the mindset and ideas about the world around them can be realized.

Learning styles are important for the facilitator to understand to promote better praxis. Understanding learning styles gives students a chance to better absorb the information with less stress. Some learning styles are kinetic, tactile, visual, and sensory learning. In "Teaching Like Jesus,"[4] Jesus used several different techniques to teach his disciples and those who came to hear him speak.

First, he engaged them in connectivism, connecting with the past and present experiences and lives of the people he talked to, such as the women at the well. For instance, he asked for a drink, and then, as the conversation became more intense, Jesus exposed her deepest hurts and revealed that he was the Messiah she had been looking for, thus causing a transformation in her actions and mindset.

Second, Jesus used the pedagogy of discussion to engage his learners; examples of openended questions, "Who do people say that I am?" "Who do you say that I am?"

These questions also promoted critical thinking. Finally, Jesus used active learning techniques to engage his learners further. Jesus did not allow his followers to be bumps on a log, lazy and nonproductive. Jesus required action to prove a point about a principle he was teaching. An example is when the disciples insisted that Jesus send the crowd away, but Jesus said you feed them. Sit them down in groups. Mark 6:37 Jesus used these techniques of learning two thousand years ago, but these techniques are used in education in the 21st century. Proving that not all old is obsolete.

Teaching the way Jesus taught n.d

Summary of Learning

At the end of the implementation, I collected journals from each participant. I also collected the pre- and post-survey questionnaires. I took the time to read the journal entries. The answers were reviewed in the lesson material. The participants expressed an understanding of the material, and that the information was known prior to the lessons. The participants also felt that the information provided was important for their use in educational settings. They expressed using the information and lessons within their daily lives and in the church setting as permitted.

Feedback was minimal because the participant pool was small.

Pre-survey Questionnaire (Appendix B)

For questions 1-3, all participants were Christians, were active in ministry, and accepted Christ at varying ages.

For question 7, if you did not disengage, what kept you involved, the following responses were given:

- Building a close walk with the Lord

- I am learning the word of God so I can grow.
- I want our children to get to know and grow in the Lord.
- I wanted to be united with believers so I can grow
- The word of God says to stay connected
- My mother
- To Grow spiritually.
- To Strengthen one another
- To learn and better understand scripture
- For Opportunities to serve and give back.

For question 8, what influence does the diversity of cultural values affect your decision-making, the following responses were given:

- I am not easily influenced, so it depends on what it is, is it aligned with the word
- It depends on the values and how they are aligned with my salvation.

For question 9, how do cultural values inform your personal values, the following responses were given:

- My values are aligned with the Word of God and not so much the world's (culture) values

Post-survey Questionnaire (Appendix C)

For question 1, after having attended these six sessions, do you have a clearer understanding of spiritual formation, the following responses were given:

- Our lives are formed intentionally to reflect Christ's likeness, attitudes, and priorities. It takes commitment to reading the Bible, praying, worshiping, and meditating on the Word of God (Psalm 1:2–3; 2 Timothy 3:16–17). They change us

from the inside out (Romans 8:29) and help us grow in our faith (Colossians 2:6-7). Spiritual formation is not passive but rather an active, daily surrender (Luke 9:23) and a thirst for God's presence.

- I have a clearer understanding of spiritual formation. The sessions were informative and enlightened me on a deeper understanding of Christian spiritual formation.

- No

For question 2, after participating in these six sessions, do you have a clearer understanding of how cultural influences affect you in your daily lives, the following responses were given:

Yes, Culture molds our thoughts, actions, and perspectives on the world. Although culture contains many things that are not inherently bad, so much of it opposes the truth of God (1 John 2:15-17). Romans 12:2 teaches us not to conform but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds with Scripture. We can begin to understand God's will.

Yes, I feel I have a clearer understanding of how our culture influences our daily lives. The sessions detailed how culture influences a Christian's daily life. I know that I am part of the world, but as a Christian, my internal and outward behavior are much influenced by God's word. We should be change agents in this world.

No, not really

For question 3, do you feel you can identify the enemy's tactics in the worldview, the following responses were given:

Yes. These sessions revealed the tactics of our enemy: deception (John 8:44), confusion (Genesis 3:1-5), diversion (Mark 4:19), division (James 4:1-3), and distraction (2 Corinthians 11:14-15). These tactics aim to take advantage of our weaknesses to get us away from God.

When I identify these schemes (Ephesians 6:11), I am alert and attack them with the Word of

God (John 17:17), prayer (Ephesians 6:18), and the Holy Spirit living in me (Galatians 5:16).

Yes, I can identify the enemy's tactics from a world perspective by understanding spiritual warfare and the enemy's tactics. The enemy manifests subtly through lies, deception, confusion, distraction, and division amongst the saints of God. The enemy tries to plant lies in our minds, and we must be careful not to fall for his tactics. He wants to steal, kill, and destroy in unseen battles.

3. For question 4, Has your mindset changed during these six sessions? Please describe, the following responses were given:

No, my mindset has not changed, but I have been enlightened during these six sessions.

No. I have always had the mindset to pay attention to the culture of the world. I embrace and interact with the world's culture, but I do not lower my standards. I do not fear or avoid the world's issues but rather use it as a stage for spreading God's light (Matthew 5:14-16).

For question 5, how have the activities of this project affected your thoughts about distractors and influences in our culture, the following responses were given:

These activities helped to open my eyes to how culture can distract our spirits in such a subtle way. We are often drawn and tempted by what social media, entertainment, and society desire us to focus on, with no room for God (Matt 6:24). Cultural influences are not always straight up sinful but turn into idols if displaced without a God-centered outlook on life (Exodus 20:3–5).

The activities of this project have affected my thoughts about distractors and influences in our culture by reiterating the tricks and schemes of the enemy and by living a holy life.

I don't believe I participated in enough sessions to have thoughts on this question.

For question 6, what can be done to expand this conversation of cultural influences on spiritual formation, the following responses were given:

This can be an ongoing conversation. We have many opportunities for believers to engage and learn how to think about this through reflection and sharing their own stories. This could include leading small group conversations on encouraging one another during cultural challenges based on the Word of God; journaling how culture drives our spiritual formation (Proverbs 4:23), Conducting workshops on the responsible use of media and technology by Keeping God as the primary focus. (1

Corinthians 10:31); and Establish a mentoring program that teaches mature Christians how to help others discern cultural matters through the Word of God.

(Titus 2:1-8) Then, the new converts can share their learning with new Christians.

I feel there are several activities that can be implemented to expand the conversation. One activity is developing a set of questions and having the group members journal throughout a specific time frame about situations pertaining to cultural influences on spiritual formation. Ensure it is a safe environment when you come back together to share. My mission as a Christian is to be transformed into the image of Christ through my relationship with God to grow spiritually and spiritually.

More engagement and less lecture – structured.

For question 7, are you aware that culture influences your spiritual life, the following responses were given:

Yes. Our culture frames our understanding of how we see ourselves, others, and God. Our cultural values should be in harmony with the Word of God. When they are not, our faith can be clouded by them and take us away from God's truth (1 Corinthians 15:33). Many cultures teach materialism and self-reliance, in contrast to biblical principles, and do not teach us to totally depend on God. We do our part, and God will do His part.

Yes, culture can influence our spiritual life, which is why it is so important that we watch and pray. We must fast, pray, study God's word, and use it against our enemies.

For question 8, has this seminar changed my perspective on the relevance of the Bible and daily activities? If yes, how? Explain. If not, why not explain, the following responses were given:

It has broadened my perspective of how the Bible can relate to our lives even today. It reminded me that the Bible is our manual when we face global challenges.

I already had knowledge of the relevance and importance of the Bible.

No, because I have been saved for many years and know and live God's word.

Therefore, I am not easily persuaded.

For question 9, how did it change your perspective on cultural influences in your life, the following responses were given:

The sessions helped me look at cultural influences, one as a challenge and the other as an opportunity. Although the world's culture contradicts God's principles, we can take back our culture for Christ. The gospel can be communicated through the arts, technology, and community traditions (1 Corinthians 9:19–23). I consider culture with a discerning spirit and want to be salt and light for Jesus in every encounter and area of influence.

It has not changed my perspective on cultural influences in my life just brought some things that I have learned and have been taught back to my remembrance.

It listed some cultural influences but hasn't really changed

Journaling

The first- and second-week journaling requested reflections on the cultural activities the participants engaged in that week. All the participants were engaged in a cooperative worship service. H3 watched a football game and was not engaged in observation of commercials or advertisements during the broadcast. I3 gave no response to the journal prompt. The other participant's information was unavailable at the time of this writing.

Week three journaling requested reflections on the information provided by the lesson and any thoughts on how the lesson could have been improved. Could the lesson be used in their context? I received no responses. The other participant's information was unavailable at the time of this writing.

Week four Journaling requested reflection on the subject matter, including whether it could be used in their ministries. I received no response. The other participant's information was unavailable to me at the time of this writing.

Week five journaling requested reflections on the subject matter and how it affected their daily perception of culture and cultural influences throughout the week. I received no response.

Week six journalling requested an overall summary and critique of the program. I asked for any suggestions to make the program, and sessions go more smoothly and effectively. I got no responses.

Conclusion

My learning during this six-week project was profound. I found that I became more confident with each session. I began as a novice, but now I feel more confident and accomplished as a writer and a presenter. Studying and preparing for each lesson provided me an opportunity to engage the word of God for specific information and validation of my thesis every week. Reading and digesting the responses to the post-survey questions helped me evaluate my presentation and improve the delivery of vital

points of interest. I began with only an outline and hoped for the participants to fill in the outline with robust discussions. However, that was not the case, and my preparation was lacking initially. As the sessions progressed, I filled in the outline with more comprehensive material. Seeking God's guidance after each session helped me to grow in ministry and personally. I grow by studying the word and preparation, my personal relationship with God grew stronger.

The entire project was conducted less enthusiastically than I anticipated; the flyer (Appendix A) was placed on the church bulletin board and my social media feeds. Responses by potential participants were lackluster in nature. I found that I lacked the skills to properly promote my project, and I had no other advertisement for the project. Responses from participants in group discussions and journal entries were more a review of the lessons and not reflections on how the lessons could be incorporated into their daily lives. Therefore, I got no response from my participants. My journaling prompts were too vague. I also used PowerPoint presentations (Appendix B) to enhance the learning experience of the participants. I also included some of the questions in the presentation to encourage conversation. Biblical study for my spiritual growth is necessary. Following the disciplines of spiritual growth is not just for the participants but for all who believe in and are in the position of leadership in the Christian educational spectrum.

Despite my small participation pool and lack of participation by all who completed the consent form, I found the six-week sessions helpful for those who participated. They expressed a more comprehensive knowledge of spiritual formation and reinforced the need for a personal relationship with God. This program also gave more

awareness to the tricks of the enemy, pointing out ways Satan confuses the masses and creates chaos in the world. “The Intersection of Christ and Culture” is a program designed to be modified to be used for all generations. Simplifying the material for the younger generation provides a concrete foundation for spiritual formation for children of all Christian denominations. Building on this foundation, the relevance and necessity for Christ in their lives carries on through young adulthood. Provers 22:6, “Train up a child in the way he/she should go, and when they are old, they will not depart from it.”

As a Biblical training tool, this program can be used as a Bible study or a new member’s class. The program can be incorporated and reproduced in other contexts where the same issues are experienced. “Intersection of Christ and Culture: A Model for Spiritual Formation that examines Biblical Principles and Cultural Influences” is a segway to creating a Christian education ministry within any context. Christian education encompasses Sunday school, bible study, small groups, and other educational opportunities in which the church, church members, and the community can engage. Community involvement is vital for effective cultural influence as a part of church ministry. As ministers of the gospel, we must engage the culture by engaging the communities we are in.

Overall, the program proved my thesis in that the participants saw a need for more robust teaching of spiritual formation to engage the youth and young Christians and encourage a personal relationship with Christ. The program highlighted the situations in the participants’ lives where discernment is necessary for cultural changes. My focus on ministry was challenged. I sought to teach and pour into the participants knowledge that they may not have had, but my participant pool was small, and I was knowledgeable

about the information I had. The anticipated age group of participants differed from those who participated in the six-week program, and I noted that this would be more effective with younger participants. As a Christian educator, I must continue to be diligent in my pursuit to enlighten young and older Christians about the necessity of a personal relationship with Christ in our lives.

APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A CONSENT FORM

United Theological Seminary

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Investigator Name: Valerie Elaine King
Contact Information: veking1@united.edu

Introduction: I am a doctoral student at United Theological Seminary.

Purpose: I am conducting a study on disengagement of young Christians from the organized church.
Requirements for Participation: You are invited because you are a congregant of the United Holy Church.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to: meet in a recorded online setting, i.e. skype, ring central, zoom once a week for a six to eight week seminar in which we will discuss current cultural norms and the biblical principles related to the norms of today. Each session will last for forty-five minutes to one hour one day a week, day, and time to be announced.

Human Subject participation:
All the participants must have consented to be in the study, and participants must be protected and treated fairly throughout the study. For example, children who are under 18 years old must have permission from their parents/ guardians. And for **women who are pregnant or may become pregnant during the study, they must provide a doctor's note** for their safety, since they are considered a protected class (i.e., vulnerable population) by the Federal Law.

Risks:
Identify all foreseeable risks and discomforts to the human participants. These may include physical, psychological, social, or economic discomfort or inconvenience.

Benefits:
Identify the benefits of your research to society, and possibly the individual human participant.

Voluntariness:
Participation is voluntary and you may skip any questions you do not wish to answer. You can also stop participating at any time. Your decision to participate will have no impact on your membership in the congregation or whatever else you think this study may have an impact upon. If something makes you feel uncomfortable in any way while you are studying, please contact me directly in person, or electronic communication. My contact

information is at the top of this consent form. You can refuse to respond to any or all of the questions, and you will be able to withdraw from the process at any time.

Confidentiality:
We will be careful to keep your information confidential, and we will ask you and all the focus group members to keep the discussion confidential as well. There is always a small risk of unwanted or accidental disclosure. The conversations and the focus groups will be recorded and transcribed only with your permission. Any notes, recordings, or transcriptions will be kept private. I will be the only one with access to your information. The files will be encrypted, and password protected. You can decide whether you want your name used. The researcher will read journal entries and documents written by the participants and keep all information confidential. Each journal consent form and questionnaire will be numbered, and letter coded to prevent identification of participants.

Summary:
If you have any questions about the research study, please contact me.

Signature:
Signing this paper means that you have read this, or had it read to you, and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, do not sign the paper. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be mad if you do not sign this paper or even if you change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this study and why it is being done and what to do.

_____

Signature of Person Agreeing to Date Signed

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B FLYER

BETHEL UNITED HOLY CHURCH

IS SPONSORING A SIX WEEK

SESSION

INTERSECTION OF CHRIST AND CULTURE

A MODEL FOR SPIRITUAL FORMATION THAT EXAMINES BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

DATE/TIME: THURSDAY EVENINGS 7 PM

NOVEMBER 5-NOVEMBER 24

LENGTH OF SEMINAR:1 HOUR

In Bethel Bible Study Portal

r.”

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX D QUESTIONAIRE

Questionnaires

Pre-survey Questionnaire

1. Are you a professing Christian?

2. If you are at, what age did you except Christ?

3. Are you an active member of the church congregation?

4. Have you been continuously engaged in an organized church since your conversion?

   If not, give five reasons why.

   If yes, skip question seven.

5. At what age did you get disengaged?

6. What caused you to disengage with the active church? Give five reasons for ending your church participation.

7. If you did not disengage, what kept you involved? Name five reasons for remaining involved.

8. What influence does the diversity of cultural values affect your decision making?

9. How do cultural values inform your personal values?

10. How have the activities of this project affected your thoughts about distractors and influences in our culture?

11. What can be done to expand this conversation of cultural influences on spiritual formation?

Post survey Questionnaire

1. After having attended these six sessions, do you have a clearer understanding of spiritual formation?
2. After participating in these six sessions, do you have a clearer understanding of how cultural influences affect you in your daily lives?
3. Do you feel you can identify the enemy's tactics in the worldview?
4. Has your mindset changed during these six sessions? Please describe how.
5. How have the activities of this project affected your thoughts about distractors and influences in our culture?
6. What can be done to expand this conversation of cultural influences on spiritual formation?
7. Are you aware that culture influences your spiritual life?
8. Has this seminar changed perspective on the relevance of the Bible and daily activities? If yes, how? Explain. If not, why not Explain?
9. How did it change your perspective on cultural influences in your life?

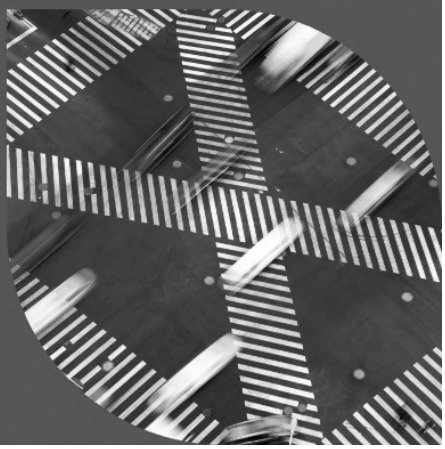
.
."

APPENDIX D

APPENDIX D POWERPOINT

Intersection between Christ and Culture

A Model for Spiritual Formation that examines Biblical Principles and Cultural Influences



The objective of these six session are:

- For the participants to examine how cultural influences are affecting their spiritual lives.
- For participants to reflect on their relationship to God (the Creator).
- Encourage Participants to have a more biblical word view.
- For the Participants to leave equipped to influence the culture in which they live.

Week one

- Define spiritual formation
  - Let's begin with Genesis 1:1 "In the beginning God"
  - Discussion the three aspects of God.
  - How do you define spiritual formation?
- Define culture
  - How do you define culture?

- Examine cultural influences on daily life (exercise for next week)
  - Participants, please journal your understanding of spiritual formation.
  - Please journal cultural activities this week.
  - Please take a few moment to reflect on the conversation we have had In this session in you Journal.

Week one review

The attributes of God

His sovereignty

The three aspects of God

God the Father (Creator)

God the Son (Redeemer,) Jesus, In the flesh

God the Holy Spirit (Sustainer) Indwelling

Spiritual Formation

Three key words in the foundation of spiritual formation.

Formation requires disciplines

reading Bible, praying, being in God's presence daily

disciple becoming more like Christ daily leading to

maturity a deeper relationship with Christ

Week Two

- Definition of Culture
  - How do cultural influences affect our world view?
  - What cultural activates did you participate in this past week?
  - Who influences culture?
    - Madison Avenue (ie commercials, pod casts,)
    - The people engaged in cultural activities (ie social media)
    - Christians (one's with a Biblical worldview)
- .Four common definition of Culture
  - Common Culture: What the world accepts as the norm
  - Pop Culture: transitory, hold the attention of the populace, temporary
  - High Culture: Long lived activities like the opera, theater
  - Theological : How humankind responds to God's commands and his Precepts

How Christians interact with culture:

Engagement be a faithful witness, don't capitulate

Be a culture maker: Make culture better by living a Holy life.

Week Two Review

- .Four common definition of Culture
  - Common Culture: What the world accepts as the norm
  - Pop Culture: transitory, hold the attention of the populace, temporary
  - High Culture: Long lived activities like the opera, theater
  - Theological : How humankind responds to God's commands and his Precepts

How Christians interact with culture:

Engagement be a faithful witness, don't capitulate

Be a culture maker: Make culture better by living a Holy life.

Week Three

Characteristics of Satan

Enemy's Agenda?

To confuse and confound people (God's creation)

Tools in Lucifer's toolbox

deception

lies

twisting the truth

planting seeds of doubt

Appeals to our fallen nature or sin nature

Week Three
Powers behind cultural changes

Cultural influences behind the cultural view today.

Scripture references to Satan

Genesis 2:8-16 ;Genesis 2:4-7 The fall of man

- Isaiah 14:12 calls him the morning star or Daystar
- John 8:44 Father of all a liars

Week three How does he attach?

- Hurls Accusations slanders, teardown and defames God and man
- Subtlety and beguiling nature
- Ruler of demons
- Tempting others to sin
- Makes man think he doesn't exist.
- Like a roaring lion roaming around seeing who he can devour,
- Comes to steal, kill and destroy.
  - Has Satan's tactics changed?
  - Are his tactics more easily identified?

  - What was illuminated by the discussion this evening?
  - Please reflect and document in your journal

Week Three Review

- Answered the question Who rules the world?
  - Satan, Lucifer, the Devil, the Enemy
- What are his tactics or tools in his toolbox?
- twisting the truth,
- confusion,
- Lies
- confusion of identity,
- Manipulation

- Culture is the toolbox, his influence on culture and the constant changes further his agenda.
- To kill steal and destroy God's creation (mankind)
- remembering that there are several definitions of culture
- Pop fleeting, transitory
- Common the world in which we live.
- High, examples that arts, theater, ballot

Theological culture how Christians relate to culture

Week Four
Cultural influences verses Biblical principles

- Scripture reference: Deuteronomy 6:1-14 Moses gives the law of God to the children of Israel for the second time.
- Daily Affirmations
- The whole armer of God
-

Week Four continued.

- Discuss the intersection between cultural influences and Biblical Principles as they relate to Spiritual Formation.
- Give participants the opportunity to discuss the Biblical principles that have been lost to the church in journal entries. And during group discussion.
- After participating in the discussion about culture and noting the cultural events you participated in this past week what was illuminated by the discussion this evening? {document in your Journal}

Biblical Principals and Cultural Influences

- List Biblical Principles
  - There is only one God (the creator)
  - Worship no other god
  - Obey the commandments of God
  - Teach all generations about God
  - Reverence God
  - Know that God is Sovereign .
- Cultural Influences
  - The Devil
  - Television
  - Movies
  - Social media
  - Social gathering

Week Four

- Let's talk about cultural influences and the powers behind the cultural view in today's society.
  - We know who rules the worldview Lucifer, Satan The Devil
- How did man fall in the fist place and what are the tactics of the enemy?
  - The tactics have not changed from the fall
    - Attack the mind
    - Lie and distort the truth
    - Deception in any form
      - Twist the truth
      - Interject wrong thinking
      - Say there is not truth
      - Your truth is not my truth
- Has he changes? Do you find you are more aware of the tactics, and how can we combat these tactics?
- Document your reflections in the journal after our discussion.

Week Five

- Question for discussion. How do we cultivate a relationship with God (The Creator) Jesus (God incarnate, the Redeemer) The Holy Spirit (The sustainer)?
  - Reading the Bible daily,
  - Praying Daily
  - Spending time in God's presence daily?
- Then the question becomes when do I have time for all of this?
  - We have to become creative.
  - Can you think of ways to creatively do these things daily?
- Is it important to have a relationship with God?
- Document your reflections in your journal please.

Week Six

- Review and end of session discussions.
- Directions on returning Journal and closing prayer.

Thank for your
Participation!!!!!!!!

APPENDIX E

APPENDIX E BARNA GROUP RESEARCH

Barna Group Research

An article by the Barna Group entitled: Six Reasons Young Christians Leave Church, cites the following reasons:

Reason #1-Churches seem overprotective.

Reason #2-Teens and twentysomethings' experience of Christianity is shallow.

Reason #3-Churches come across as antagonistic to science.

Reason #4-Young Christians' church experiences related to sexuality are often simplistic, judgmental.

Reason #5-They [participants] wrestle with the exclusive nature of Christianity.

Reason #6-The church feels unfriendly to those who doubt.[1]

[1] The Barna Group, "Six Reasons Young Christians Leave the Church," Biologos, June 5, 2017, https://www.biologo.com. 6 reasons why youth are leaving the church.

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APPENDIX F
LIFEWAY RESEARCH

LifeWay Research

The student dropout survey was grouped under four categories,

1. Ninety-six percent cited life changes.
2. Seventy three percent revealed church or pastor related reasons.
3. Seventy percent cited religious ethical, or political or political beliefs taught.
4. Sixty three percent cited student and youth ministry reasons.[1]

[1] Aaron Earls, "Most Teenagers Drop Out of Church When They Become Young Adults, Lifeway Research, January 15, 2019, https://research.lifeway.com/2019/01/15/most-teenagers-drop-out-of-church-as-youngadults/

APENDEX G
PEW RESEARCH

PER RESEARCH

Pew Research

1. I just don't believe
    a. Forty percent were raised in religious families.
    b. Eighty-two percent identified themselves as atheist.
    c. Sixty-two percent were agnostics
    d. Thirty-seven percent believed nothing.
2. I just don't like church. Why?
    a. Organized religions are more divisive than unity.
    b. I think religion is now more of a business
3. I am spiritual but not religious.
    a. I am open-minded.
    b. I feel that there is something out there, but I can't nail it down as a religion.
    c. I can pray anywhere; I don't need a church for that.
4. I am simply too busy
    a. I stopped going to church when I went to college.
    b. I was never super religious.
    c. I don't practice any religion or religious rituals.
    d. I just don't have time.[2]

[2] Ken Ham, and Avery Foley, "Pew Research: Why Young People Are Leaving Christianity," Pew Research, September 8, 2016, https://answersingenesis.org/church/pew-research-why-young-people-leavingchristianity/

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